

Washington Education Association
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A place for everyone in our union



Forward together ...

This is my first column for *We 2.0* as president of the Washington Education Association. In these first few months on the job, I've already traveled far and wide to meet and talk with hundreds, if not thousands, of educators, to both speak and listen. I've walked with educators on strike lines in Toutle Lake and Kennewick. I've met with members and leaders from Shoreline to Spokane, from both classified and certificated units, in locals both large and small.

'I am firm in my belief that we are stronger together, and my commitment to each of you is this: There is a place for everyone in this union.'

It was when I was visiting my wife's kindergarten room on the second day of school when I wondered, what will public education be like for these 5- and 6-year-olds by the time they graduate in 13 years? How can we, at WEA, build on our success with McCleary so that every single student has the

opportunity to succeed? How can WEA continue to make a positive difference for them and their futures as well as the futures of our members?

The answer lies in our commonality: our belief in our students, in the idea that each and every one deserves the chance to succeed not just in school, but in life beyond school. That is why WEA Vice President Janie White and I are determined to focus on righting some wrongs of the past, by addressing issues of racial and social justice.

I don't know exactly what that means yet (watch this space) but I can say this: There is more we have in common than not. No matter where we come from or what we look like, most of us want the same kinds of things, whether it be for our students, ourselves or our families. As we begin to address issues of racial and social justice, I am firm in my belief that we are stronger together, and my commitment to each of you is this: There is a place for everyone in this union. You are each welcome here.

As the union president, I sign my letters and emails, "Forward together." Sums it up just right, I think.



Larry Delaney
WEA President

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Facilitator Jan Chang, Edmonds EA, leads a freeflowing discussion among Asian Caucus members about issues in their schools relating to being educators of color.



Governance and Administration
Larry Delaney, *WEA President*
Janie White, *WEA Vice President*
Armand Tiberio, *WEA Executive Director*

WEA Communications Staff
Dale Folkerts, Adam Isaguirre, Brooke Mattox-Ball, Linda Mullen, Eddie Westerman, Linda Woo and Rich Wood

We are interested in your feedback and ideas.
Reach Editor Linda Woo at lwoo@washingtonea.org, by mail at P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100, or 253-765-7027.

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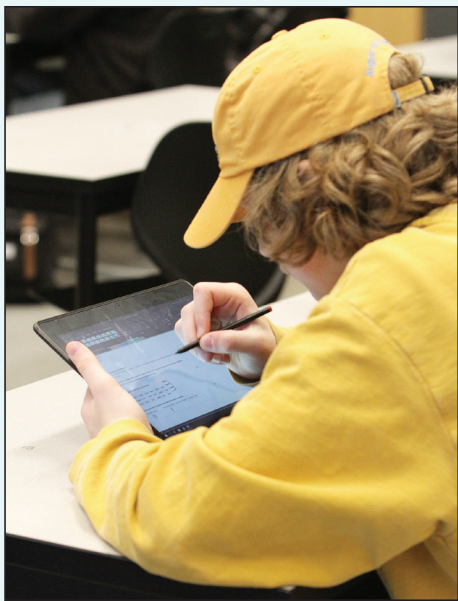
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From note taking to group edits to turning in homework, laptops are part of the daily school day and tool for every middle and high school student in Bellevue.

One-to-one technology is reshaping our classrooms

More than a decade ago, schools began investing heavily in laptops at the urging of school boards and parent groups who saw them as the key to the 21st century classroom. In Washington, the number of K-12 schools giving every student a laptop computer has gained steam steadily every

year. This past school year 2018-19, the state Superintendent's Office found 839 schools offered the one-to-one initiative, which provides a device (typically, laptop, tablet, Chromebook or iPad) for every student — most of them at middle and high school levels.

Generally, goals behind the initiative are to allow educators and software to deliver more personalized content to students, boost students' technology skills, and empower students to do more complex and creative work. Fusing technology with lesson plans adds to student achievement and excitement about school, and the one-to-one initiatives can close technology gaps for students from low-income families, proponents say.

More technology generally means that students become more digitally savvy, but it remains to be seen whether that ultimately creates a higher-quality workforce. Measuring the impact of laptops on learning is tough. Research on the effects on student outcomes isn't clear and varies from study to study. Factors such as a change in teaching style or the curriculum also might affect results.

Don Burress, a math teacher at Sammamish High School in Bellevue, has found the initiative frustrating at times and worries about using technology for the sake of technology. Students beginning in grade six each are assigned a laptop at the beginning of the school year.

"We've been at the forefront of the laptop experience," Burress says. "It's been hit and miss."

"As teachers, we hear from tech companies all the time how computers in the classroom and in particular, one-to-one laptops or tablets, are the best for students," he says. "My perception is the software we get is designed for other things and that it gets tweaked to best meet our needs. We beta test their software for them and that's not the ideal situation."

Schools should use technology to have students do things they otherwise wouldn't be able to do, whether that's programming robots, creating something with a 3-D printer or videoconferencing with Nobel Prize-winning scientists. Simply digitizing tasks that students can accomplish without computers or tablets, like writing papers, peer-reviewing essays or doing research, doesn't count as an innovative use of technology, Burress says.

But some see enormous value in using Chromebooks, laptops, etc. as a digital classroom tool. Students can do homework, even if they are sick. They can complete group projects without having to meet in person. Many schools use digital education programs that test students' English and math skills, then adjust lessons based on their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers can receive immediate feedback and data analyses of student test results.

Tim Litzenberger, a science and leadership teacher at Chinook Middle School in Kennewick, has been using the one-to-one computer strategy with his students for two years. He feels the technology enhances and improves learning.

"It makes the information more accessible in multiple ways — instead of lecturing, I'll make a YouTube video — the kids can take notes at their own pace," he says. "They can watch it repeatedly."

Litzenberger says he can survey his students quickly, which allows him to do a formative assessment and see how they are doing with learning the material. He uses Google Classroom to get immediate feedback. The one-to-one program, he says, opens possibilities both in and out of the classroom. One person can be watching science simulations on the Internet; another can be working on a video; someone else can be doing something on paper. One of his favorite things is that students can still access the information given in class from home if they are unable to attend.

Like Litzenberger, Molly Horne-Brine, who teaches Spanish at Kentlake High School in Kent, also values the immediacy of the tool: She can check in with the 25 to 30 students in her room, even when she's not in

Bellevue math teacher Don Burress uses a combination of technology and traditional pencil and paper tools to engage students.



See ONE-TO-ONE INITIATIVE, Page 7



Left to right: Kristopher Olsen, Oak Harbor EA, makes a point during a workshop at the WEA Educators of Color Conference held at Edmonds-Woodway High School in Edmonds. Right: Anamarleny Alvarez Villa, Highline EA, listens at the welcome.

'All' is the New 'Normal'



Jordan Rawls
Fifth-grade teacher
Mirror Lake Elementary
Federal Way

"A big thing that I thought before I came here, and that is getting validated here, is that students need a space to tell their story. A lot of problems and disadvantages come from adults in schools not listening to their students, and more so telling them how things should be, and what they should do.

And as a black educator, it's very easy for me to relate to my black students. But when I think of my Hispanic students and my Asian students, the things that I do for them and the ways that I learn about them are the things that I expect my white colleagues to do for all the students as well."

The history of racial inequality and economic injustice in our country creates continuing challenges for our students and for all WEA members. As part of our collective goal to advance racial justice, WEA held two Educators of Color conferences this fall — one in Edmonds and one in Richland.

The conferences, part of an effort to create a new culture in our schools that advocates for an end to institutional racism and promotes racial justice, offered an opportunity for WEA members of color and their allies to grow together, elevate skills and knowledge around building collaborative communities, and empower one another and our students to overcome shared challenges. NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, keynote speaker at the Richland conference called the work "the most urgent duty."

"Our mission has to be to create a new normal," Eskelsen García says. "The new normal is the word 'all.' When we say *all* our students, we mean every blessed one of them. We want a new normal that honors, respects and loves all our students — a love for their common humanity."

April Eberhardt, a college and career specialist at Spokane's Shadle Park High School, says she was inspired by Eskelsen García's keynote.

"She hit the nail right on the head when she said it is our patriotic duty to end systemic racism and when she said it will take constant and systemic justice to combat constant and systemic



April Eberhardt

racism," says Eberhardt. "That's when a light bulb went off for me."

Anita Garcia Morales, former migrant worker, teacher and co-director of Racing to Equity (an organization dedicated to improving equity in education, government and community institutions) was the keynote speaker in Edmonds.

Nearly 50 percent of the students in our schools are of color while only about 14 percent of our teachers are, leaving a wide gap that often leaves WEA members of color feeling marginalized, isolated and unheard. The conferences provide members the opportunity to meet and network with other educators of color as many work in buildings where they are the only non-white staff member.

Elisa Yzaguirre, an ELL and literacy teacher in Seattle, says this was the second year she has attended.

"I remember having such a positive experience that nothing was going to keep me away," Yzaguirre beams. "It's a place where I felt like I was welcome, and belonged, and there were so many positive voices that it felt really empowering."

Yzaguirre says the conference helps her find additional resources that will encourage ongoing discussions about race, equity and ethnic studies.

"It should be a continual discussion," she says. "We all should be continuing to do this work. It's not like, 'Oh, I learned it. I'm done.'"

Scott Wilson, president of the Pasco Association of Educators, attended the Richland conference to learn "more tools and some better ways to have those conversations" with his members.

"I believe that one of the significant issues that we have to deal with in our society is implicit bias and this unrecognized racism ... I believe we have a long, long

way to go,” Wilson says. “For those who believe that they are blind to color, I would simply try to point out to them that that means they are blind to recognizing their own blindness. We have to confront it as directly as possible and yet as cautiously as we can so that people can hear and not put the barriers up.

“I have a lot of members who are on all sides of this,” he says. “I need to help them wake up. My doing so could ruffle some feathers but that just might have to be what happens.”

Adrienne Jones, an elementary office coordinator in Tacoma, says the conference is a place where she feels accepted for who she is.

“They weren’t asking me to fit in to some box to please other people,” Jones says. “You learn that you’re not alone. ... That’s what these conferences mean to me. It empowers me to be able to go back into a world that doesn’t accept me for who I am, and learn to navigate through white America as a person of color.”

Trainer Jon Greenberg, a Seattle teacher, knows firsthand the discomfort of raising certain topics: Race. Ethnicity. Privilege.

That discomfort can be a good thing because it creates the starting point for discussion: “Why is the topic of race and ethnicity so difficult, especially for white people?” he asks a classroom of teachers and support professionals during his workshop in Edmonds.

“They don’t think there’s a problem,” one educator volunteers.

“For me, a person of color, I’m afraid to say something because I don’t want to offend anybody, so it ends up just not getting talked about,” another woman adds. “It would be really cool if we could all just educate each other, and not get into that judging and saying you are racist, just because you are questioning.”

Greenberg shares a concise explanation, dubbed the good/bad binary, from author and UW Associate Professor Robin DiAngelo. She notes that a list of attributes often assigned to racists — uneducated, bigoted, Southern — make them a “bad” person, and the attributes commonly applied to non-racists — educated, open-minded, progressive — make them “good.”

That societal binary of either being “good” or “bad” perpetuates racism by shutting down discussions. Instead of listening and learning, people can grow immediately defensive because they hear themselves labeled as “bad.”



NEA President Lily Eskelsen García, the first Latina to hold the top position, delivers keynote address about racial justice at the Eastern conference in Richland.

“So notice your own defensive reactions,” Greenberg suggests, “and use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge rather than a rationale for closing off.”

Greenberg’s seminar on challenging white privilege in our schools was part of a wide range of workshops that focused on equity, implicit bias, intervention, recruiting and mentoring educators of color, and avoiding burnout. Additionally, attendees also met in caucus to talk openly about race.

Lilia Huerso, a counselor at Moses Lake High School, says the conferences are starting points for more conversations.

“We have to talk about racism if we’re going to be able to fix it or make a change,” Huerso says. “If we’re still putting Band-Aids and trying to cover it, we’re not getting anywhere and we’re still not going to be able to help students. We all have bias, but let’s work together. Let’s continue.”

Watch NEA President Lily Eskelsen García’s keynote speech delivered at the Educators of Color Conference in Richland at www.WashingtonEA.org/lily.



WEA held two Educators of Color conferences (one in Edmonds and one in Richland) to create a new culture in our schools that advocates for an end to institutional racism and promotes racial justice. The conferences allowed members including Meehee Kim, Edmonds EA, a chance to meet and network with colleagues of color as many work in buildings where they are the only non-white staff member.



Denise Wilson
Fifth-grade teacher
Presidents Elementary
Arlington

“I came to the conference because the district and the community that I live in is not very diverse, and I wanted an opportunity to be with other educators who are like me and have an opportunity to network and share experiences and continue working with people that want to really promote the ideas and the themes of diversity and, not just diversity, but inclusivity, making sure that everybody has a voice and that everybody is heard.”

WEA members still stand united in the fight for competitive educator salaries



WEA members continue to build unity and use strength in making solid gains at the negotiating table, WEA Bargaining Specialist Jennifer Silves reports. Indeed, whether in Tukwila, Renton, Northshore, Moses Lake or Vashon to name only a few, members continue to show satisfaction with the deals bargaining teams are bringing forth to ratify.

There were two strikes, this fall, one east of the mountains in Kennewick (about 1,200 members) and one in much-smaller Toutle Lake in southwest Washington (just under 40 members). Both Kennewick and Toutle Lake members were on the picket lines for three days and both ratified Tentative Agreements the Friday before Labor Day weekend. The Kennewick strike was particularly frustrating in that the two sides worked eight days straight with a mediator without much movement before finally making a breakthrough.

While both strikes focused on compensation, stronger student and staff safety and workload language were also negotiated. In Kennewick, there were several new provisions for members who work with students with special needs.

Seattle EA President Phyllis Campano says she is most proud that their whole contract was bargained through a racial equity lens. SEA's Center for Racial Equity and the Seattle School District's Racial Equity Advancement teams worked together to train negotiators from both sides to view all of the issues on the table with an eye toward avoiding racial bias detours that would continue to support the status quo rather than help create positive change for all students.

Meanwhile, locals all over the state made strong gains without having to carry picket signs. Renton Education Support Professionals (RESP) bargaining team members say they are proud of the agreement reached for the paraeducator Fundamental Course of Study (CFS). Paraeducators are required to complete 14 hours of training or two seven-hour days for the FCS. RESP negotiated a contract where paras will be paid time and a half for the two days they will work at those trainings while still maintaining their ability to earn pay for other training hours under existing language. They also guaranteed that WEA cadre members will be able to provide the training — including two of their own RESP leaders.

Moses Lake EA President Jeremy Pitts says their bargaining team is proud of so many things that it is difficult to nail down only a few.

“Our team spent a great deal of time on workload numbers and issues and we came away with small reductions in all areas, but we also created an MOU for our Special Education staff so that their caseloads are specifically looked at in depth for the upcoming bargaining this upcoming summer,” Pitts says. “Personally, I’m extremely proud of the fact that we were able to create new rules for our salary schedule that allow our Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Educational Staff Associate (ESA) staff to capture most, if not all, of their industry/work experience for their placement on our schedule.”

Other Moses Lake highlights include new and strong language around discipline and student and staff safety.

“We are thrilled our August in-service days were cut in half,” Vashon EA President Glenda Berliner says. “This gives us much more time to get our classrooms ready and everyone is less stressed.”

She says they also recaptured some wellness days. Compensation — an issue which had been underwhelming the year before — was better addressed at the table this year. Berliner says one of her students is always telling her that teachers don’t get paid enough and that when he recently mentioned it, she was able to tell him, for the first time, that teachers are doing okay.

In Northshore, certificated teachers bargained together with Education Support Professionals to build on last year’s 19.2 percent pay increase. This year teacher salaries will range from \$61,200 to \$119,379, an increase of 2 percent over the previous year, while salaries for paraeducators will increase by 5.14 percent.

Negotiations also focused on targeted improvements to support the whole student with additional positions for school counselors, nurses, psychologists, special education, English Learner instruction and audiologists. And in a new, collaborative model, the district and union set aside \$700,000 to expand student mental health support in the 2020-21 school year.

Teachers in Ellensburg and La Center turned

Top to bottom: WEA members standing strong in Ellensburg, Kennewick and Toutle Lake for competitive salaries and gains that will benefit students and staff in the long haul.

up the pressure this year when it became clear their districts were less than candid last year about its financial prosperity. After voting to strike, informational pickets in Ellensburg and La Center and other community awareness efforts convinced the districts to negotiate three-year contracts. In Ellensburg, teachers will get a salary increase of 7 to 11 percent (or an average increase of 10.6 percent) this first year. The salary boost goes a long way in attracting and keeping quality educators in Ellensburg. In La Center, the three-year contract brings an 11.5 percent pay increase this year, 3 percent next year and 4.25 percent in 2021, meaning top pay will pass the \$100,000 threshold. LCEA also doubled the amount the district would pay per student for overloaded classes and won a 2.8 percent supplement for special-ed teachers, counselors and SLPs.

In Eatonville, teachers united to raise community awareness, convincing the district to drop proposed takeaways and return its focus to improvements for students. The contract adjusts class size limits, increases overload pay, ensures quarterly release days for kindergarten and first-grade assessments, and provides additional days for counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and special education teachers.

Eatonville’s bargaining team did not overlook pay, of course. After winning a 21.9 percent overall increase last year, raises in this three-contract total nearly 17 percent, with top pay in 2021-22 exceeding \$105,000. That’s a nearly 40 percent gain over just four years!

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Summer 2019

ONE-TO-ONE INITIATIVE from Page 3

class. With technology, she can track if a student has completed and turned in an assignment and even record an oral response directly to the student without having to rely solely on the substitute teacher’s report.

“It’s great for communicating with students,” she says. “There’s not always enough time in the day to give one-on-one feedback to students. Instead of having students make an appointment outside of class, I can give more immediate and personalized feedback.”

Yet educators in schools where the one-to-one initiative has been in place for a number of years also say there is such a thing as too much screen time. They can depend on students to spend class time surfing the Internet. They catch students on Netflix, Spotify, YouTube and other sites, and they are aware of workarounds students use to bypass filters that block the sites. Using laptops does make it easier for some students to become distracted online, but teaching them to manage those distractions is part of a digital education, they note.

Not everyone wants to put a laptop on each student’s desk.

Burress, in Bellevue, says he has modified technology use to best match his class needs. This year, he has one class where students haven’t used their laptops at all. Instead, everything has been done on paper. Recently, as an experiment, he held “No Tech Tuesday,” where he asked his students to put away their screens for as long as possible.

“I have systems in place where I talk to every kid at least once a day and ask at least one question,” he says.

“A little of me says it’s inevitable and kids are using laptops outside of school and will use it in their futures, but it should be implemented thoughtfully, considerably, purposefully.”

Learning with technology includes dealing with uncharged laptops, missing styluses and weak Internet connection in buildings at times.

Educators' campaigns champion public education

More than a dozen WEA members seek seats on school boards across the state



Diane Sundvik

A host of WEA members are stepping up to run for local school board offices across the state. More than 20 teachers, former teachers, and ESP members from every corner of the state are currently serving or vying for a school board position.

While several WEA members already hold state-level office, there has been an uptick in those who are interested in school board slots.



Brandon Hersey

"I believe that we need to have school board members who have hands-on experience with the day-to-day activities, operations, and needs of the district's students, employees and community," says **Diane Sundvik**, a recently retired speech-language pathologist who is running for a seat on the Kennewick School Board.



Jennifer Jones

Federal Way EA member **Brandon Hersey** was appointed in September to fill a school board position in Seattle. Hersey, an elementary school teacher, says he is committed to ensuring every student has a bright future. As an assistant scoutmaster to Troop 008, an African American scout troop which serves the Rainier Valley in Seattle, Hersey says he has watched the young men develop into future leaders.



Luckisha Phillips

"I want that same vision of opportunity and prosperity for every child in District Seven (in Seattle) and beyond," Hersey says.



Bethany Rivard

In Chewelah, two retired WEA members — former school bus driver **Warren Stewart** and former high school math teacher **Kyra Rolstad** — are both running for positions on the school board. They are not the only retirees looking to win this fall. WEA retirees and WEA-Retired members in Chehalis, Hockinson, Nespelem and several other

communities also are running for their respective school boards.

Two WEA Highline Community College AHE members, **Jennifer Jones** and **Luckisha Phillips**, are hoping to win elections this fall allowing them to continue serving in positions they were appointed to fill earlier this year on the Federal Way School Board.

Candidates say they are running because they believe the elected positions should champion public education.

"I am running for the Federal Way School Board because I am a passionate advocate for public education," says Jennifer Jones, who is campaigning for Federal Way School Board Position 2. "I have taught at Highline College for 22 years and every day I see how education changes lives. Education is the best way to reduce social inequality."

Vancouver EA member and California Casualty's Washington State Teacher of the Year **Bethany Rivard** is one of a few members who are running campaigns in southwest Washington in hopes of bringing the perspective of an accomplished educator and student advocate to the school board.

"As an educator, I have a deep understanding of how school board policies directly affect students in the classroom. My priority is to make decisions with a focus on what is best for students," Rivard says.

"Currently, there are zero educators on the Evergreen School Board," Rivard says. "I believe there should be educators in places where decisions about education are being made. I know how Board policy filters down to the classroom, and as a teacher, I see the issues the community is facing through the voices of my students."

*I want that
same vision of
opportunity
and prosperity
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Seven (in
Seattle) and
beyond.'*

Brandon Hersey
Federal Way EA