

Improving Student Achievement



Greetings WEA members,

This is my first issue of We 2.0 as your president. I look forward to using this platform to share with you the stories, progress and pitfalls we all face as educators and union members. I thought I'd use this issue to tell you more about my thoughts and motivations as we start this new chapter together.

About a week after I became president, a reporter asked if WEA would look different with me at the helm. I laughed and said something like, "The person who sits in this seat doesn't speak for themselves. They speak for the 82,000 members." As I said it, it sank in once more what an awesome and daunting responsibility that is. To represent you, I need to know you, to listen to you, and really hear you so that I can reflect our collective interests in my new role. That is what I plan to do, with alacrity.

I am tirelessly hopeful for the future. I don't take "no" for an answer. This dogged optimism has served me well though I didn't come by it easily. I was born with asthma and had to learn to overcome physical restrictions to be an active and healthy person. I love the challenge of pushing myself and breaking new barriers. As I did so, I found that I wasn't satisfied to just ride my bike or run a 5K. No. I wanted more. So I trained for 100-mile rides and ran marathons. When I became a teacher, I surprised a few people, pushing past barriers to become one of two women "shop" teachers in the state, or as we now call it,

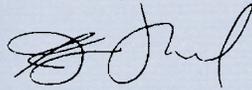
industrial arts. I taught wood, plastics, electronics, drafting and computer technology.

It wasn't long — in fact, just a year — before I became my school's building representative. Like many who have come before me, I found that working on behalf of my colleagues and our students was challenging and exciting. I continued to grow and develop as an active WEA member.

In the year ahead, I will share stories: how and why Washington's high-poverty SIG schools outperformed 1,400 others in the nation; how your peers in Sequim managed to find 40 days of class time when they switched to the Common Core standards, and more about our ongoing efforts to secure funding for smaller class sizes and educator cost-of-living adjustments. In fact, this issue has a story about an upcoming "Class Size Counts" activity in the fall. I urge you to read it on page 8 and participate in that event.

In the meantime, I hope you are enjoying your summer — it seems to be flying by as fast as ever this year. Travel. Read. Play. Enjoy the long summer days. And we'll see you in the fall.

Wishing you all the best in the year ahead,



Kim



Kim Mead
WEA President

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Left: WEA Vice President Stephen Miller signs students' yearbooks. On the cover: Experiential education and other shared experiences spur conversations among parents and staff in the SIG school communities.

000000! New state budget falls short on class size and COLAs

Don't believe the hype.

The new state budget still falls far short of fully funding the quality K-12 public education every Washington student deserves — especially when it comes to reducing class sizes and funding educator COLAs.

The Legislature failed to fund smaller class sizes for all students, which means Washington's average class sizes will continue to be ranked 47th in the nation. Legislators from both political parties also voted to continue the suspension of educator cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), even though Washington's teachers are the lowest paid on the West Coast.

The Legislature's vote to suspend the COLA is a \$320 million cut in compensation — essentially a huge tax increase levied solely on educators. Updating an old message, WEA delegates at the NEA Representative Assembly wore yellow buttons that read "000000." That's how many years in a row the state has failed to fund educators' legally mandated COLAs.

And while legislators are claiming the final state budget increases K-12 basic education funding by \$1 billion, the state's own budget summary shows the increase is substantially less. After subtracting more than \$400 million in cuts to educator salaries and benefits (including the COLA), the total K-12 increase is around \$560 million above what's needed to maintain current service levels — and that's over two years.

That's about a third of the \$1.5 billion legislators themselves said was needed to begin complying with the Supreme Court's McCleary decision, which ordered the state to fully fund schools by 2018.

After years of cuts, the new budget increased higher education funding by about \$119 million over two years.

It's unknown how the Supreme Court will respond to the Legislature's K-12 education budget.

While legislators fell short on reducing class sizes and funding the COLA, WEA members worked with Gov. Jay Inslee, Speaker of the House Frank Chopp, House Majority Leader Pat Sullivan and the House Democratic Caucus to defeat a slate of Senate bills that attacked collective bargaining, due process and other rights.

Visit www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org for an in-depth report from WEA lobbyists about the regular and special 2013 legislative sessions and the impact on K-12 and higher education.



Your healthcare enrollment is changing

Enrollment for all WEA Select plans will take place online Aug. 26–Sept. 30 through the new interactive tool called Your Benefits Resources (YBR).

The online site, developed by WEA in partnership with Aon Hewitt, helps WEA Select plan-eligible members make enrollment decisions in medical, dental and vision plans.

Those enrolled in the WEA Select plan in 2012-13 were automatically moved to YBR, but members need to create a user ID and password in order to access their current coverage and plan details, along with provider lists to search for specialists near you.

For new hires and those with qualified status changes, however, the YBR portal will be your tool to enroll, add or remove dependents, or process other

changes. There are tools on the site that will allow members to compare your WEA-provided benefit options and costs.

Enroll by Sept. 30, but check with your district in case their deadline is earlier and enroll by their deadline. If you are satisfied with your current plan, you do not need to do anything. New this year: Coverage for all WEA Select plans begins Nov. 1. During annual enrollment, plan-eligible participants can use cost comparison and cost estimator tools personalized to reflect their plans on YBR.

For those who need translation services, or prefer to use the telephone, a dedicated customer service center will answer questions and help with enrollment during business hours.

Your Benefits Resources is available anywhere, anytime, you have an Internet connection. Access Your Benefits Resources at <http://resources.hewitt.com/wea>. You also can set up your account and ask questions by calling the customer service center at 855-668-5039, 9 a.m.–noon and 1–6 p.m. weekdays. Extended call hours will be offered during open enrollment: 7 a.m.–6 p.m. weekdays Aug. 26–Sept. 30. A quick information guide is available at www.washingtonnea.org/content/docs/comm/guide.pdf.



Washington's high-poverty schools outperform similar schools in nation in math and reading



Upper: One reason Washington's SIG schools have been successful is that associations were involved with the districts and because educators and others in the schools had the opportunity to meet with one another. Lower: Last year, parents, teachers, administrators and family support workers had the chance to learn from one another during a three-day seminar aimed at cultivating family and community relationships required to sustain school reform.

Late last year, staff at Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) noticed a rather extraordinary trend while combing through research.

Data showed that the improvements occurring at Washington's high-poverty schools that received funds in 2010 and 2011 were significantly outpacing some 1,400 similar schools across the country.

Why did our schools fare so strongly compared to others? The first simple reason — funding. OSPI made a strategic decision to award significantly more money to fewer schools, allowing them to implement more costly changes. Our Association agreed with the strategy which leads to the second probable reason the schools were so successful — Washington's bargaining laws for school employees provided an opportunity to see how school-specific adaption in collective bargaining agreements could work to increase student success. Because of our strong bargaining law and support for those schools, union negotiations and our members' voices were crucial

in how the grant money was used.

Three years ago, the federal government provided grants to schools that were labeled "lowest achieving," based on state math and reading scores for earlier grades and on graduation rates for high schools. The funding, called School Improvement Grants (SIG), were awarded to 28 schools in Washington the first year, 18 schools the following year and 10 more during the third year of the program.

From the beginning, WEA, the local affiliates who represent our school employees, and the National Education Association recognized that lessons learned in the SIG schools would likely be applicable at all schools. Providing a high level of union support for those who were working at the schools gave voice to those educators whose hard work generated the results.

"Because of WEA, NEA and local support, those who work with the students every day shared a multitude of highlights and lowlights they encountered on their school improvement journey," says Ann Randall, WEA's federal liaison and state implementation specialist. "We are putting finishing touches on a report which Sen. Patty Murray says will be used to guide future policy decisions being made at the federal level."



U.S. Sen. Patty Murray checked in with staff from SIG schools at the 2013 WEA Rep Assembly in April to recognize them for their hard work and to listen to their experiences. Representatives from a majority of the SIG schools were lauded and honored with a standing ovation at the RA in Bellevue.

Schools accepting SIG dollars were required to adopt one of four federally defined intervention models: Closure, Turnaround, Transformation or Restart. The bulk of the 28 schools who received SIG money the first year chose the Transformation model which required replacing the school principal if he or she had been at the school for more than two years and addressing four specific areas: developing teacher and principal leader effectiveness; implementing instructional reform strategies; extending learning time and creating community connections; and providing school operating flexibility and sustained support.

As Washington's SIG schools were working through this federal requirement, the rest of the state was in the beginning stages of designing and implementing a statewide teacher and principal evaluation system for all schools as required by the passage of evaluation legislation, SHB 6696. Because the Transformation SIG schools were "early adopters" of student growth data in evaluation, they were also instrumental in forming WEA's work on the new teacher evaluation system.

That same federal Transformation model also required schools "to identify and reward school leaders and teachers who have increased student achievement and graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities to improve professional practice, have not done it." This requirement smacked strongly of individual teacher merit pay, a practice that WEA has opposed since it does not recognize the scaffolding and cumulative impact of multiple teachers that produces individual student achievement.

Faced with a federal requirement that only allowed rewarding the SIG school staff, all of Washington's Transformation model schools bargained the amount of the reward and required that it be shared among all staff.

The schools were awarded three-year grants ranging from over \$1,040,625 to \$4,665,068. One school whose district chose the Closure Model was awarded \$217,252 to shut down the school and redistribute students. The real work began *after* the arduous application process and decision-making about which model to adopt.

Over the next three years WEA members and others who worked in the SIG schools spent countless dedicated hours working with students, their families and those in their communities to help students succeed.

Math and reading scores began soaring and graduation rates increased by double digits but that is only part of the story. A variety of unrecognized indicators of success were also apparent. While every one of the 28 schools has a unique success story to celebrate, we highlight only a few:

- There was a 70 percent decline in student discipline referrals at Monticello Middle School in Longview;
- Marysville's Totem Middle School increased the number of eighth-graders taking algebra from 10 percent to 100 percent;
- West View Elementary in Burlington-Edison serves an average of 40 parents a week at its Evening Family Center where they take ELL classes, learn computer skills and pursue their GED;
- The success of Wellpinit Elementary near Spokane helped the rural district pass the first levy in its history, and
- Sunnyside High School's graduation rate went up more than 30 percent from 2009 to 2012. More than 80 percent of its students graduated in 2012.

"I am overwhelmed by the steadfast dedication of the staff in our SIG schools," Marysville EA President Arden Watson says. "I watched members turn an initial sense of despair into strong expectations, innovation and hope which they instilled in their students, their families and our community."

Congratulations to the smashing success of Washington's 2010-2013 SIG Schools:

- Cascade and Chinook Middle Schools, Highline
- Quil Ceda & Tulalip Elementary Schools and Totem Middle School, Marysville
- Hawthorne and West Seattle Elementary Schools and Cleveland High School, Seattle
- Gaudrone, Jason Lee and Stewart Middle Schools, Tacoma
- Adams Elementary, Washington Middle School and Stanton High School, Yakima
- Grandview Middle School, Grandview
- Lakeridge Elementary School, Renton
- Monticello Middle School, Longview
- Morton Junior/Senior High, Morton
- Oakville Junior/Senior High, Oakville
- Onalaska Middle School, Onalaska
- Rogers High School, Spokane
- Soap Lake Junior/Senior High School, Soap Lake
- Valley View Elementary School, Toppenish
- Wapato Middle School, Wapato
- Wellpinit Elementary School, Wellpinit
- West View Elementary School, Burlington-Edison



Union at heart

Everett EA's Kim Mead takes helm as fight intensifies on call to fully fund basic education, including educator pay and smaller class sizes



Gutting and slicing fish on a processor ship; working in a pathology lab; signing her name as K.A. Mead instead of Kim to ensure “getting a foot in the door” for employment in the industrial technology field — Kim Mead begins serving her term as WEA’s new president

with a wide-ranging journey from her birth in Bellingham to ardently advocating for herself and for WEA members.

Mead says her grandfather, who worked well past his normal retirement date as a school custodian at Larabee

Elementary, was a large proponent of learning. As the oldest of nine children, he was never able to complete his formal education because he left school early to help support the family.

Mead’s mom, who wanted to become a teacher, worked for some time as a bookkeeper then became a school custodian in Everett in the same school where Mead ended up teaching. Her paternal grandfather was the chief of detective and only motorcycle cop in Bellingham and if that wasn’t enough to force Mead and her sister to “behave,” her father, who was a union leader at Georgia Pacific, was elected to serve as a Washington state legislator. The two sisters were surrounded by those who create laws and those who enforce them.

As a child, Mead was drawn to the sciences. She had planned on studying cardiology to become a doctor, and took science courses at Western Washington University. That changed while working at a Whatcom County pathology lab one weekend. Over that short period, she says, they saw a toddler who had taken a horrendous fall, a student she knew in school who got in a bad accident and her own grandfather who died from a heart attack. “That made me realize that I didn’t handle death all that

well and that if I worked as a cardiologist, I would have to deal with this regularly.”

And so, Mead says, she floundered for a while then discovered industrial technology through an architecture class she was taking. She took to it and began exploring a career in practical engineering where she was, often, the only female in her classes, consistently having to fight males from “taking over” her projects. About this time, Mead met her best friend and soul mate, Lindsay Mead.

One summer, Mead decided she was willing to try a new adventure to make some extra money and before she knew it, she was working on a processor ship. What she did not know until she arrived in Alaska was that the fishermen were on strike. “Of all things, we got shot at while we were on deck, by a union person. When it was all said and done, the whole thing was a unique experience but not one I needed to repeat.”

When Mead’s husband returned to WWU to get his teaching degree in history, she decided to get her teaching certification in industrial arts. After finishing her degree, she applied for jobs but there were very few openings in that field.

“One thing I told my kids is the difference between when I got my first degree and my second degree is that the first one allowed me to have a job while the second one allowed me to have a career,” she says.

Mead became a union activist early and in the usual way. She has served as a building rep, vice president and president of Pilchuck UniServ and president of the Everett EA. She has served on the WEA Board, WEA Executive Committee and NEA Board. She says she has loved serving in every capacity, and particularly enjoys lobbying around Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) issues.

Mead is more concerned about the impact our own capital has on our students than the one in the other Washington. She hopes to continue highlighting the work our members are doing in the so-called “lower performing” schools that received School Improvement Grants.

She wants to tackle educator evaluations, and she wants members to be aware and ready for the Common Core State Standards. While she is not excited about them, she says, they are here to stay so, “Let’s make sure we provide educators with support and assistance they need to help students succeed.”



Upper: Newly-elected WEA President Kim Mead and granddaughter Addyson Sharp, 4, spend an afternoon together in the Pilchuck office in Everett so Mead can finalize packing details for her move to Federal Way. Lower: Whether it’s behind a microphone at a Representative Assembly, in front of a conference room or on the phone, Mead is a consummate champion of public education and the WEA members who work on behalf of Washington’s students.

One-on-one with WEA's VP Stephen Miller

Bellevue middle school social studies teacher Stephen Miller has served members for many years as a building rep, bargainer, secretary, vice president and president of the Bellevue Education Association. He has served on multiple WEA committees, including the WEA-PAC Board and WEA Board. Most recently, he led the WEA-Sammamish Council as president. He also has represented Washington as a NEA State Director.

We 2.0 recently asked Miller to share a few tidbits not usually found on a standard résumé.

Q: What did you want to be when you grew up?

A: At age 8, my Aunt started paying for my annual subscription to National Geographic magazine. As a result, I wanted to become a National Geographic photographer who traveled our beautiful and mysterious world.

Q: How did you get into teaching?

A: During my K-12 education I found social studies classes and lessons intellectually exciting. This inspired me to major in History and Economics at U.C. Berkeley. The last five years I've attempted to create that same intellectual excitement amongst my sixth- and seventh-grade world civilization students.

Q: Your email signature describes you as an "aging athlete." Tell us about that.

A: Having been raised in Seattle by British parents, I was probably destined to fall in love with soccer. I wear the jerseys of the U.S. and England national soccer teams and the Seattle Sounders. As a fan of most sports I also wear Steve Largent's jersey from the '80s and an Edgar Martinez '90s jersey. I look forward to buying a Sue Bird jersey. When I'm not playing soccer or basketball, I'm skiing, biking or hiking.

Q: What is your favorite kind of Association work?

A: No matter the role, my favorite activity is anytime a group of members are empowered through a public activity such as doorbelling, attending a school board meeting or testifying in Olympia.

Q: What do you see are the strengths and challenges of our Association and how can we address and leverage what we have?

A: Over 80,000 WEA members contribute to the excellent public schools in Washington every day. Our challenge comes from getting the majority of our members involved with our organizing efforts. My experience has been that members will participate in public advocacy efforts when the message is tied to their daily lives through their local leadership.

Q: What is one mistake you made along the way in your Association life that taught you an important lesson?

A: In September 2004 I lead my first Rep Council meeting as the new Bellevue EA president. I incorrectly assumed the building reps would doorbell for a WEA-endorsed candidate just because I said it was important. I didn't make that mistake again and vowed to turn the BEA Rep Council into an organizing machine.

Q: What are your hopes and dreams for what the future holds for our students?

A: The last five years I've taught at a majority-minority middle school where more than 30 percent of the students come from homes of poverty and the majority speaks two languages by age 11. If the state and federal governments provide the necessary funding, I believe the United States is capable of being the most egalitarian and successful public school system in the world.



Sixth-graders share summer plans and smiles with WEA Vice President Stephen Miller on the last day of school at Odle Middle School in Bellevue, where Miller taught social studies and world civilization.

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Washington's student-teacher ratio is over the top

When it comes to overall statewide student-teacher ratio, Washington ranks 47th out of 50 states. Even though the rest of the U.S. has made progress, our student-teacher ratio is equal to what the national average was in 1977. We are 36 years behind the rest of the nation.

But as staggering as these numbers are, they don't tell the real story of classroom overcrowding in our state and the toll it takes on learning. Staffing ratios are just a proxy for the numbers of students assigned to a teacher; they don't take in to account such factors as planning periods or teachers assigned to work with small groups but are also in the regular classroom. Actual class sizes are much higher.

This October, WEA and its allies at Class Size Counts, a new non-profit organization advocating for class-size reduction in Washington, will be conducting a survey of student enrollment in public school classrooms.

Just as the Audubon Society conducts its annual Christmas Bird Count and housing advocates organize a point-in-time census of homelessness in their One Night Count, the October Class Size Counts project will take a snapshot survey of class sizes across our state. Through an interactive website, parents, teachers and other volunteers will record their counts, share comments and tell their personal stories about class size and the difference it makes for students and schools.

The findings of the count will be publicized to raise awareness and shared with legislators to focus their debate in the 2014 session.

Find out more and sign up to take part in the survey at www.ClassSizeCountsWA.com

