



# we2.0

Washington Education Association  
Volume 60, Number 3 – Summer 2022

## A new year ahead

In her job as a speech language pathologist, WEA's 2022 Educational Staff Associate of the Year Melissa Petersen helps her students communicate their needs. As a union activist, she and her colleagues work together to communicate their needs. 6

# WEA-PAC now, more than ever

Typically, in this issue of *We2.0*, this space would be reserved for a back-to-school message from me to you all, the 95,000 educators who comprise the Washington Education Association. We know, however, that we are living in times that are anything but typical. This was never more evident than last spring when a draft of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* was leaked, and ultimately last June when the Court overturned a women's right to choose as guaranteed in *Roe v. Wade*.

In 2022, reproductive freedom, the separation of church and state, the right to a free and accessible public education, along with the right to decide who to love, how to love and who to marry — all freedoms that we have taken for granted — are all at risk of being lost.

As NEA President Becky Pringle said last June, “We have seen the same faction of politicians working overtime to reverse decades of progress on racial justice, on women's rights, on workers' rights, on LGBTQ+ rights, on voting rights, on our right to privacy, and on our students' freedom to learn in our public schools. These attacks on our freedoms are designed to do one thing — consolidate unfettered power into the hands of a few. We must stand up for all of our rights.”

I want to be real here. We know that cases that threaten women's rights, the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, and the rights of undocumented children have or are making their way to the Supreme Court, and we know how this Court is going to rule. We know this!

We also know that if the argument that was used in overturning *Roe* is used for these other cases, it will be up to individual states to defend and protect the rights and freedoms that so many of us value.

The truth of that matter is this: we may not have the ability to impact what happens in Idaho, South Carolina or Texas, but can most certainly impact what happens here in Washington — and it all begins with a strong WEA-PAC.

WEA-PAC is the Washington Education Association Political Action Committee and is the easiest way that the 95,000 members of our union

can exercise their collective voice in defense of public education, organized labor and the values that we share.

For the last 20 years, the cost to join WEA-PAC has been \$2.25, while the cost of political campaigns has grown substantially. In fact, all data indicates that the cost of campaigns will grow exponentially over the next 10 years. Why? Well-funded and organized interest groups who wish to weaken public education, dismantle unions and restrict basic freedoms are funneling more money than ever before to candidates in state and local elections who support their vision for an America that supports the few, not the many. With that said, in August's primary, 84% of WEA-PAC-endorsed candidates made it through the primary to the General Election. That is a huge number. But without a strong WEA-PAC, these numbers will not be sustainable.

I know that most of you who are reading this did not get into a career in public education to flex your political muscles. Yet, there is no separating public education and politics. They are forever joined. And if we truly want to realize what public education can be for students, educators and communities in our great state, we cannot not sit back and wait, we must be active participants.

So, here's my ask of you. If you believe in the promise of public education, the strength that collective bargaining and unions provide for all of us, and the rights and freedoms that America has promised, then please scan the QR code and join WEA-PAC today at the \$10 per month level. Your monthly PAC contribution will be automatically deducted from your paycheck. It's that easy.

Are you already a WEA-PAC member? Then please scan the QR code and increase your monthly contribution to \$10.

Already giving \$10 a month? Then encourage three of your colleagues to join WEA-PAC (during your duty-free lunch, or before or after official work hours).

The time is now. We cannot wait until we lose champions in Olympia. We must be proactive and re-elect and retain the good people who share our beliefs and values. Support WEA-PAC today!



Larry Delaney  
WEA President

## CONTENTS

3

Meet your  
WEA Board

4

Welcome to the  
WEA Family,  
CAPA of Sumner-  
Bonney Lake

6

WEA Educational  
Staff Associate  
of the Year

10

Union solidarity



# Meet your WEA Board.

Ellen Simonis is grateful for the opportunity to serve on the WEA Board this year.

The first-term board director from Trout Lake says she's involved in the union for her colleagues. Trout Lake is a small rural city in Klickitat County.

"They are so busy fighting for students; they need someone to fight for them," Simonis says. "Union work always brings me back to my center and keeps me grounded when I get overwhelmed by ugliness directed at public education.

"It's not much different from my original 'why' of being in education in the first place: I want to make a difference for my students."

In August, the board gathered in Vancouver for its retreat to prepare to represent their locals and councils in the coming school year. The retreat, which kicked off a new year of board meetings, was a way for the board to jell as a team and for members to get to know more about one another and the different regions.

"This year, nearly half of our Board is new, and it was so good to be back in-person for the first time in over two and half years for both our Board Retreat and Board Meeting," WEA President Larry Delaney says. "There are certainly many challenges that lie ahead, and I have no doubt that our Board is up to the task."

This year, Simonis and the other member-elected board directors will set policy for the organization. The WEA Board meets throughout the year. The board's duty is to carry out the program and policies set at the annual WEA Representative Assembly (RA) and to exercise the general authority of the RA.

WEA President Larry Delaney and Vice President Janie White lead the WEA Board.

Board members are classroom teachers and/

or education support professionals elected through WEA's 22 UniServ councils. The board also includes NEA Board Directors who are elected by the WEA Representative Assembly (RA) delegates. In addition, four programs — WEA-Retired, Student WEA and WEA Higher Education and United Faculty of Washington State — each elect a member to serve on the WEA Board. (It's usually their chairperson or President.) Depending on the outcome of council elections, the Board also may have at-large positions.

Council presidents also serve on the board. Their terms vary depending on their local constitution and bylaws. This is also the case for those who serve as program chairs.

Elected board directors serve two-year terms.

Vallerie Fisher, an education support professional from Seattle, has been on the board for many years.

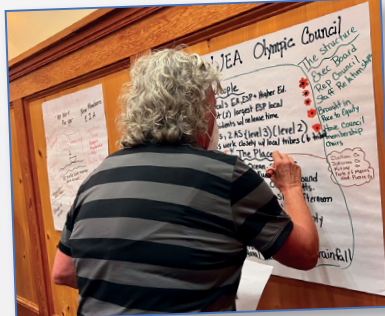
"I ran in my council and won as a candidate that would ask the hard questions and bring a diverse BIPOC presence and an ESP perspective," says Fisher, who is also serving on the executive committee this year.

The size of the board changes due to membership numbers and the outcome of council elections. Some years there are at-large positions, too. The board currently has 79 positions. Some seats are still vacant and will be filled during the year.

"The WEA Board Directors are our members' conduit to their state union, and I encourage members to contact their Board Director with suggestions or concerns," Delaney says.

"There are certainly many challenges that lie ahead, and I have no doubt that our Board is up to the task."

*The WEA Board met in August to prepare to represent their locals and councils in the coming school year. Board members spent time going on a "road trip" to learn about WEA's 22 UniServ councils and their unique culture.*



Longtime classified staff members Taleen Venesky, left, and Dawn Palumbo helped usher in a formal union and first contract for the Classified Administrative Professional Association of Sumner-Bonney Lake, a journey that has spanned some 12 years.



## CAPA of Sumner-Bonney Lake joins the union

For years, Sumner-Bonney Lake classified staff didn't have a union. Instead of working under the terms and conditions of a formal collective bargaining agreement or contract, they relied on verbal agreements and policies set by the school board.

And raises, if any, often were at the mercy of who you knew.

"It was very blatant," says Dawn Palumbo, program administrative-support specialist for secondary at the district office and bargaining lead. "The process had to change because what has been going on is not OK. A lot of our members were hurting, and they went through a lot. We wanted to retain them."

The road to unionize, however, has been long and hard fought, says Palumbo, who has been with the district for 16 years and saw the unsuccessful try in 2009.

Collecting signature cards for a union election can be difficult, doing so during a pandemic even more challenging. Taleen Venesky, student-

services secretary at Bonney Lake High School and president of CAPA of Sumner-Bonney Lake, says organizers met colleagues at three different public sites to answer questions and hear concerns all during the past few years. Employees wanted

improved compensation, better working conditions, and clear and transparent arbitration procedures. Longstanding issues were exacerbated when the district cut 25% of its staff, which fell predominantly among those in classified positions during a district budget crisis about five years ago.

"It was like sticks kept getting thrown into our spokes," Venesky says. "It's been a long journey."

Sumner-Bonney Lake classified professionals voted to form a union in late 2020. The Classified

Administrative Professional Association (CAPA) of Sumner-Bonney Lake, with 108 dues-paying members, is the newest K-12 ESP unit to join WEA. The local represents secretaries, nurses, security officers, transportation workers, techs, nutrition services and those working in special education.

*Already, CAPA members are enjoying the benefits of the union. They negotiated their first official contract in late May, which members voted to ratify with a whopping 97% yes vote.*



Already, CAPA members are enjoying the benefits of the union. They negotiated their first official contract in late May, which members voted to ratify with a whopping 97% yes vote.

Now, as outlined in their new three-year contract, there is a transparent and fair process for job reclassifications. Additionally, a Joint Reclassification Appeals Committee is now in place to consider denied requests. There is greater flexibility for staff to collaborate with their supervisor in the event of emergency delays or closures. On wages, CAPA fought for and won an average of over 16% increase for its members in just the first year of a three-year contract. (Increases range 5-29% across the different job groups to address extreme differences in salary averages.) Members will also receive full back pay for the 2021-22 school year. Other issues such as workload are part of ongoing conversations between members and the district.

“What we’ve lost in 15 years we can’t gain in one contract,” Palumbo acknowledges. “The goal was to build a strong foundation that can’t be broken.”

CAPA’s bargaining team spent 200 hours — all but one session — over Zoom finding creative resolution on issues members cared most about. Members attended while vacationing out of state and one even Zoomed in from a hospital bed.

“Our heart was about our members, it was not just getting it done,” Palumbo says.

The communities of Sumner and Bonney Lake in south Pierce County are close-knit and there is longevity and pride. While small when compared to urban areas, the group is committed.

“We’re a very loyal group,” Palumbo says. “We love the district, we love our families, we love what we do and what we’re servicing.”

Members, says Venesky, kept their work at the forefront and buoyed their spirits.

“Our members kept us going,” she says. “It seemed it was always at the right time. When we were down, they picked us up.”

Both readily give props to Puget Sound UniServ reps Rina Paul and Chuck Hurt and leaders from Sumner-Bonney Lake Education Association and Sumner Paraeducators Association for being crucial in their organizing and negotiating efforts. For instance, the Sumner-Bonney Lake Education Association bargaining team, which represents certificated members, wore CAPA shirts to the bargaining table while negotiating with the district, while others wore red to school and work sites. The information-sharing, guidance and education have been invaluable, they say.

“We had multiple unions to choose from (to affiliate),” Palumbo says. “Our intent was to be strong, and we knew what WEA does, what it stands for, and that’s what we wanted to be a part of.”

## Navigating the student loan forgiveness quagmire



Your union is working on several fronts to help with the student loan debt crisis in this country. We want to help you better understand the Federal Loan Forgiveness programs and to move you forward toward forgiveness. Join us online Sept. 14 or Oct. 6, 4:30-5:30 p.m., to learn the facts about the current federal loan forgiveness programs, both Teacher Loan Forgiveness and Public Service Loan Forgiveness as well as the Limited PSLF Waiver. Oct. 31 is the deadline to apply for the waiver. Additional information about the PSLF program is at <https://www.nea.org/pslf>.

You also will learn how to access to the NEA Member Benefits Loan Forgiveness Navigation tool available at [www.neamb.com/start](https://www.neamb.com/start). Members with current federal loans and student members are welcome. Register for one of our sessions at <https://wea.mobi/3c4p9Zy>.

---

## Free professional development available

Looking for free professional development and clock hours? WEA again will offer asynchronous courses for the 2022-23 school year for all educators and community members in Washington through the Inclusionary Practices Professional Development Project. Funded by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction’s Office, the project is a state-wide focus on professional development designed to support staff to increase inclusion for students with disabilities.

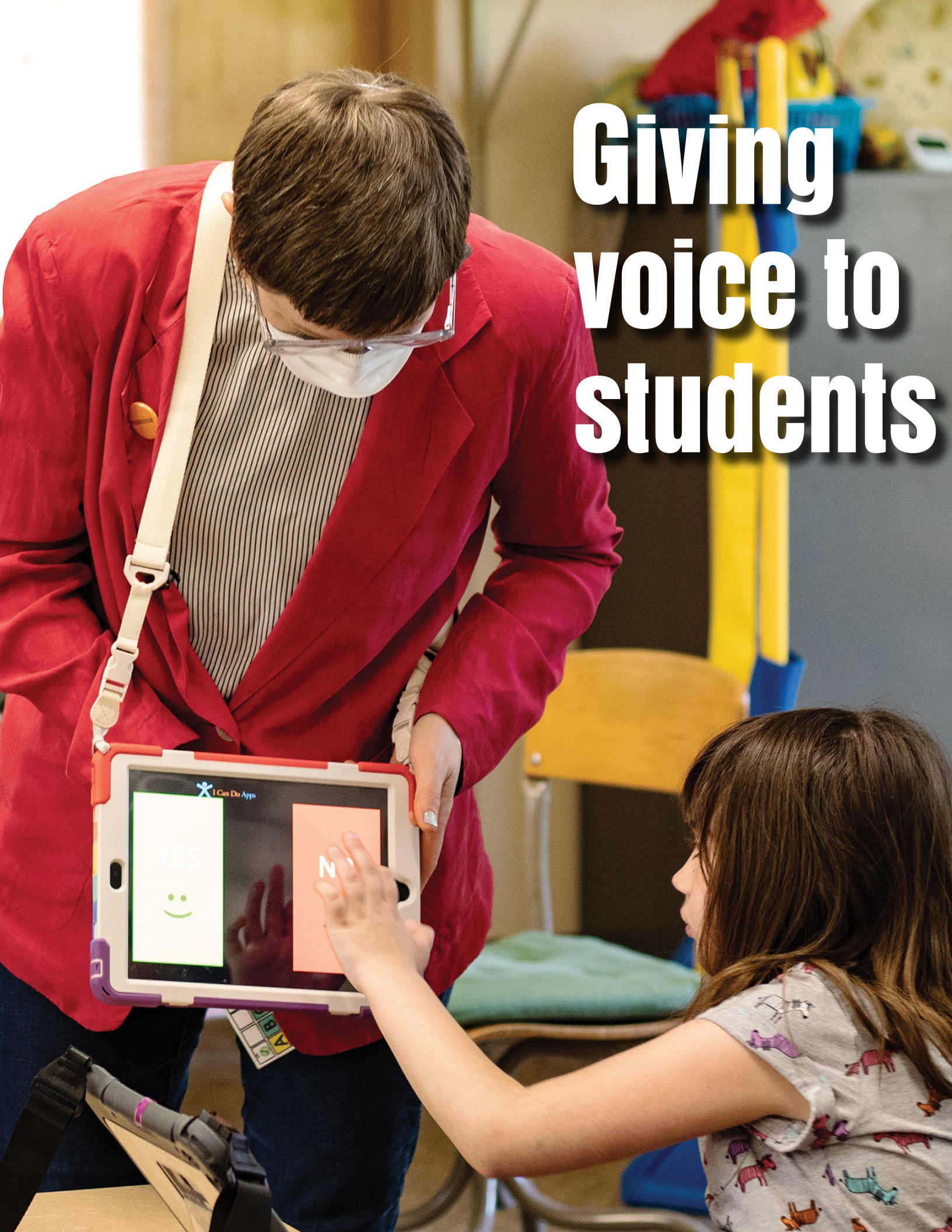
The 24 online courses were created with flexibility in mind, so there are no due dates for discussions or assignments, except for the final deadlines each year. You will move through the course at your own pace.

- The last day to register for a course is May 29, 2023.
- The last day to complete course and submit assignments is June 5, 2023.

Visit the asynchronous web page on WEA’s website for course listings, descriptions and registration links at <https://www.washingtonnea.org/events-training/pd/asynchronous-courses/>.



# Giving voice to students





# 2022 WEA Educational Staff Associate of the Year Melissa Petersen

As the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) at Maplewood Parent Cooperative and an Assistive Technology Specialist for the Edmonds School District, Melissa Petersen loves being able to help her students express themselves.

“Hearing their voices is my greatest professional joy,” she says. And by voices, she’s not just talking about just sounds and words coming out of their mouths: Part of Petersen’s work is teaching non-speaking students how to use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.

In fact, Petersen developed an AAC device that students use at Maplewood and all 34 of the district’s schools — a research-based universal CORE board. Students communicate by pointing at words and pictures on printed sheets, with 38 high-frequency words on the base and more than 250 words on additional flip pages.

If that’s not enough words, she’ll give them more. In an ESA of the Year nomination letter, special-education teacher Jennifer FitzGerald describes how Petersen took the time to individually design a board for a student to talk about her favorite things.

“Her mom recently emailed to say how extremely grateful she is that her daughter was able to use her board to socialize at a family potluck,” FitzGerald says.

Some students can’t use their hands to select pictures. For them, Petersen sets up iPads and computers connected to switches or eye-gaze control.

“The problem-solving and training aspects of this work are so rewarding when a student starts to use the tech to talk for themselves,” she says.

One thing Petersen appreciates about being named WEA ESA of the year is getting more recognition for her fellow speech language pathologists.

“It helps people understand we’re here, some of the things we do and how that’s connected to education,” she says.

*Melissa Petersen has been a building representative for speech language pathologists and audiologists for the past 10 years in the Edmonds School District. Part of her job is helping families navigate insurance and Medicaid requirements to get students the equipment they need.*

In addition to helping non-speaking and medically fragile students, she works with general-education students on things such as speech sounds, language skills and stuttering.

She also created an ACC Resources website (<https://wea.mobi/AACresources>) that educators and families can use to help students communicate. It includes printable versions of her CORE board in seven languages and instructions on assembling a flip book.

Petersen and her colleagues also manage the district’s assistive-technology devices and help families navigate insurance and Medicaid requirements to get equipment students need, such as power wheelchairs and eye-gaze-controlled computers.

“It is a lot of work each time,” she says of the insurance approval process, “but it is all worth it when our students get the tools they need to thrive and live.”

Petersen also works on improving her own knowledge and sharing what she knows with her colleagues. She has presented to conferences and on webinars, focusing on helping teachers, paraeducators and SLPs to use AAC tools with their students.

*In her job as a speech language pathologist, Petersen helps her students communicate their needs. Devices such as iPads help her students learn to communicate.*





*Petersen helped develop a CORE board used throughout her district. Students communicate by pointing at words and pictures.*

Petersen is also excited to welcome the next generation of SLPs to the field and has supervised at least one pre-service student SLP every year since 2010.

In her local association, Petersen has been a building representative for SLPs and audiologists for the past 10 years, and 100% of those SLPs and audiologists are members of the union. In addition, 67% are WEA-PAC members and 55% are NEA Fund for Children and Public Education members, something Edmonds EA President Andi Nofziger calls, “a credit to Melissa’s promotion of the Association and union values within the department.”

In 2014, she led the effort to establish a national certification bonus for ESAs in the Edmonds collective bargaining agreement. ESAs now receive \$1,500 per year if they hold a national credential on the same level as National Boards for teachers.

She sees the connection between her advocacy for students and her advocacy for her colleagues.

“As an SLP, freedom to me means the freedom to communicate: The ability to say what you want to say when you want to say it, and to be heard when you do that,” she says, adding that this means fighting for the technology and staffing her students need.

“When I am fighting for freedom for my colleagues, that means organizing,” she says. “We are joining our voices together so that we are louder and larger and impossible to ignore, so that together we can communicate what we need, and what we need our schools to look like to support ourselves and our students.”

Petersen has really appreciated that support this past school year, which she describes as “the hardest of all my 15 years.”

“The union’s got my back,” she says, “and thank goodness for that.”

Watch Melissa Petersen in class with her students at <https://youtu.be/A5Z6IL0WXw4>

**“The problem-solving and training aspects of this work are so rewarding when a student starts to use the tech to talk for themselves.”**



# Rethinking the educator shortage

**N**EA reported last February that 55% of educators are ready to leave the profession. This statistic has been backed up by reports that thousands of educator positions in districts across the U.S. remain unfilled despite the 2022-23 school year already having started in some states. Exhaustion from the pandemic, insufficient pay and lack of respect for educators as professionals are named among the reasons for the shortage.

Washington state is experiencing its own educator shortage. Districts across the state have unfilled positions. Seattle, the state's largest school district, had 170 open positions as of Aug. 15. Of those, 84 are certificated teaching positions, and 28 are paraeducator positions, with 133 of the overall openings in special education. Just south of Seattle, the Kent School District had 148 open positions, 64 in special education.

While the numbers are smaller in other districts, the division of openings also is occurring. Pasco, in Central Washington, had 34 certificated openings and 48 classified at the time *We2.0* went to press. Of those classified positions, 28 are for paraeducators. Spokane, Central Valley, Ellensburg, Auburn, Vancouver and most other districts are seeing the same trend.

What we are experiencing is less of a certificated teacher shortage than a shortage of substitute educators and in classified staff positions across districts. These shortages have resulted in workload issues for all positions and are especially acute in special education and amongst paraeducator positions.

Spokane EA President Jeremy Shay says, "Although we haven't had an issue filling our open certificated positions [in Spokane], there was clearly a lack of substitutes that resulted in many jobs going unfilled last year."

Shay explains that the larger issue is in classified units, specifically custodians and paraeducators. "Spokane had over 70 unfilled para positions last year. We must address classified salaries as a state so we can attract and retain employees for these essential positions."

Debby Chandler, president of WEA's ESP Action Coordinating Team (ACT), offers reasons as to why classified positions are so difficult to fill.

"Working in education is a calling," she says. "Educators are drawn to working in schools because they can make a difference in students' lives."

Chandler points out that despite the strong draw to help students achieve their potential, the low pay for classified staff makes it impossible for them work in the field.

Chandler describes the situation of a school secretary she knows. "She has worked for the district for longer than 10 years, but her children still qualify for free and reduced lunch, and she relies on state assistance to supplement her income."

She explains that most classified positions are not full time. She has seen shortages in every unit, with particularly acute shortages in nutrition services, bus drivers and paraeducators. "For paraeducators especially," Chandler says, "they are required to have college degrees and specialized training. They are being tasked with working with our most vulnerable populations, but for the lowest wages."

"When classified staff make only pennies over minimum wage and do not have the opportunity to work full-time hours, they feel disrespected," she says. "Morale is really low. When everyone is used to having a team, but there are no people to fill out that team, they are overworked and feel undervalued."

The shortage is also negatively impacting our smaller and rural school districts.

"In smaller districts, it's all hands-on deck," says WEA-Eastern UniServ Council President Audra Shaw. "Administrators are teaching classes and teachers are covering classes during their prep time." Shaw explains that the first staff email of the day is often one seeking volunteers to cover other staff who are out sick.

"The lack of bus drivers has led to adjusting start and end times and running double routes," she says, "and our classified support personnel are providing services to students with schedules modified to ensure general education instruction occurs." Shaw shares that classified support staff in Cheney public schools are already short-staffed by at least 20 unfilled positions across the 10 sites.

Contract bargaining is underway, and it is essential for district leaders to consider how to best attract and retain all of their education staff. Two important areas to address are salary and workload. Ensuring all employees have the potential for full-time work at a professional rate of pay will ensure open positions are filled and will improve morale across education staff positions.

What we are experiencing is less of a certificated teacher shortage than a shortage of substitute educators and in classified staff positions across districts. These shortages have resulted in workload issues for all positions and are especially acute in special education and amongst paraeducator positions.



# Building strength through solidarity



*Top: Seattle EA Director of the Center for Racial Equity Joaquín Rodríguez and WEA Vice President Janie White joined other labor partners as delegates to the Washington State Labor Council convention this summer. Bottom: Rodríguez facilitated a panel discussion that looked at how public-sector unions can proactively drive membership.*

**W**EA members are united by our passion for education and our students, and we're united as working people as part of a larger labor movement. We see this when workers from other unions join us on picket lines — and we join theirs — but it runs so much deeper. Each WEA member belongs to our local union, WEA, and NEA; many of our local unions are also part of the AFL-CIO through their affiliation with the central labor council in their area or with the Washington State Labor Council.

“When we bring our strength and unity to the larger labor movement, we amplify our power and build solidarity,” says WEA Vice President Janie White. “Making connections across the labor movement means we can all win together.”

Each year, the Washington State Labor Council (WSLC) brings together delegates from member unions for its Constitution Convention to set policy and priorities for the Labor Council and where delegates share skills, build relationships and collaborate to move a worker agenda in Washington

state. This year, WEA Vice President Janie White and Seattle EA Director of the Center for Racial Equity Joaquín Rodríguez served as delegates to the WSLC convention, collaborating with fellow labor leaders across industries and occupations, connecting on key educator priorities, and learning from other unions. Rodríguez facilitated a panel “Labor Leader vs. Responder,” which looked at how public-sector unions can proactively drive membership rather than defensively responding against anti-union attacks.

“It was great connecting with union workers from other occupations and seeing their organizing,” says Rodríguez. “Every union has to adapt to a highly polarized, changing world and sharing our ideas makes us all stronger.”

WSLC is leading the way in driving itself and its affiliated unions to better reflect, include and honor our diverse membership and to combine the union strength across the state to win for working families in the Legislature. Rodríguez and White organized to support a resolution continuing the breakthrough work on Race and Labor, a nationally recognized program to teach union leaders/members about the institutional racism and systemic policies that disadvantage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and divide the working class. This program reflects WSLC’s clear purpose around racial equity, outlined in its constitution.

“The movement for racial justice and economic justice needs to be one and the same,” White says. “WSLC is working hard to help all working families understand how interrelated our issues are.”

Working people are stronger together. Whether it’s sharing our skills, backing a political candidate, walking a picket line or fighting for racial justice, when we combine our power with unions in our area or across the state, we win.

“The cornerstone of our strength as workers and unions is solidarity,” outgoing WSLC President Larry Brown says. “It is only when union members stick together in solidarity that workers make gains in contract language, providing for increases in wages, hours and working conditions. In my time, I have seen the power of solidarity between unions when we all join in for the fight, on the picket line, on the streets, in the marble halls of state and local government.”





Left: Instructor Tanisha Brandon-Felder, right, models good listening behavior while Diana Cruz speaks. Brandon-Felder, one of the lead facilitators for the inaugural in-person Nakia class, is also the Shoreline School District's Director of Equitable Leadership Pedagogy and Family Engagement. Right: Nakia's online roots show, even when it meets in person: Many activities are through shared online documents that participants access on their computers.

# A coaching community

*Members learn to help other members at WEA's Nakia Academy*

**T**he first thing you need to know about Nakia Academy is that you must talk about Nakia Academy. It depends on this.

Spreading the news is part of how participants increase the pool of educators who will guide beginning educators, ensure that educators practice their work through a lens of race, social and economic justice, and provide social and emotional support for their colleagues.

By all accounts, word is out: An upcoming October cohort received 120 more applicants than it could accommodate.

About a dozen Nakia Academy participants started the program in August in Shoreline, where they learned to develop their coaching and mentoring skills together. It was the first time the program was held in person, after getting its start on Zoom during the early days of COVID-19.

Kellogg Middle School special-education teacher Diana Cruz

said she learned about the program from a fellow teacher who asked if she was going. She checked it out and decided to do it.

"I'm looking forward to learning ways that I can support other teachers or get support myself," Cruz said on the first day of class.

Over 3 years ago, members of the WEA Early Career Educators Committee found that existing mentorship programs for new educators were not meeting members' needs. They had also been directed by members at the Representative Assembly to create a network for educators of color, so those two ideas coalesced into this mentor program specifically "for and by people of color."

The program has grown a lot in that time. At the end of September, there will be 400 Nakia Academy participants in more than 55 different locals. And in October, 90 more educators will begin.

*See NAKIA, Page 12*

**we2.0**

Washington  
Education  
Association



Scan with your  
smartphone to  
stay connected  
to WEA.

## Governance and Administration

Larry Delaney, *WEA President*  
Janie White, *WEA Vice President*  
Aimee Iverson, *WEA Executive Director*

## WEA Communications Staff

John Coghlan, Adam Isaguirre,  
Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe, Mandy Manning,  
Brooke Mattox-Ball, Julie Popper,  
Rachael Tom and Linda Woo

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

*We 2.0* (ISSN 1544-5283) is published quarterly by the Washington Education Association, 32032 Weyerhaeuser Way S., Federal Way, WA 98001-9687. Subscription cost of \$1.38 is included in annual membership dues. Separate subscription price: \$15.50 annually.

Copyright 2022 by the Washington Education Association.

Periodical nonprofit postage paid at Auburn, WA, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *We 2.0*, P.O. Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063-9100.





### *NAKIA from Page 11*

They complete an initial series of 8 to 10 learning sessions on coaching and mentoring. That's mostly been spread out over 8 weeks via Zoom, but the in-person Shoreline program condensed all those sessions into two all-day sessions.

Participants spend a lot of time in discussion breakouts, where they have space to talk about identity and what that means in terms of their education work.

Khue Tran, a speech language pathologist at Parkwood Elementary School, said she's seen diverse representation grow during her years in the field.

"In 1993, when I graduated, I was the only Vietnamese speech therapist in the whole country," she said. Now, 4 out of 15 speech therapists in the Shoreline district are Asian.

"You do need educators who look like the kids," Tran says, noting that some parents seem to take comfort in interacting with school staff from backgrounds more like theirs.

Graduating is just the beginning of their leadership journey. Some go on to be equity directors in their locals. Some serve as Nakia

Academy instructors. Several award-winning educators have been part of the program.

Before participating in the program, most did not have positions where they coached and mentored others. Since then, 44 have changed roles, both in their day jobs and their union positions. And completing the program satisfies the state's mentorship requirements, qualifying them to take paid mentor positions.

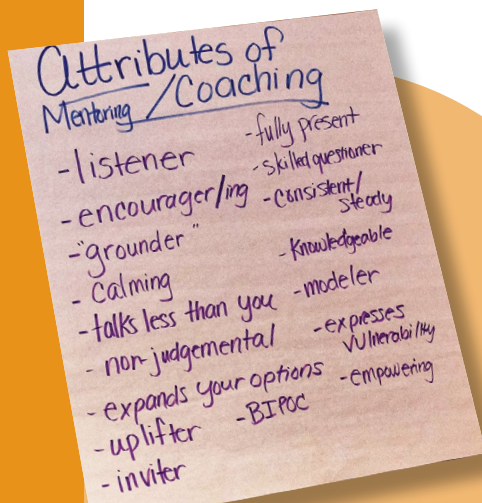
After the initial sessions, they meet quarterly to continue learning from each other. If that's not enough, there's a Facebook group, and discussion groups for topics such as equity in school counseling, doing equity work in specific regions and reading with an equity lens. While official WEA-sponsored activities have been almost all virtual because of COVID, some participants have met up in small groups to go on walks together or have dinner.

While most cohorts have been open to members statewide, Shoreline Education Association co-sponsored the two-day August program for its members, along with Shoreline School District. That means the local and district share costs of the stipend paid to participants, paid work time for mentors to meet with mentees and work time needed for other meetings. Shoreline EA also picked up the cost of lunch at the August sessions. WEA paid costs for things like T-shirts, bags and books.

Smaller locals may not be able to sponsor a local cohort, but their members can apply to be part of the statewide Zoom cohorts. And educators seeking mentors in districts where none are available can be paired with a mentor from somewhere else in the state.

That's exactly what the program is designed to do: Help educators help each other.

*Khue Tran has seen a lot of change since the days when she was the only Vietnamese American speech language pathologist in the country. Below: Participants focus in on what makes someone a good mentor.*



For more information, please see [www.washingtonea.org/educators/early-career-educators/](http://www.washingtonea.org/educators/early-career-educators/) or scan this QR code. Applications have closed for this fall but updates will be posted here.