

REA Members,

Praise be to a yellow Friday tomorrow! May your planning time be productive and satisfying!

The energy and excitement of the first few days will wear off soon but what won't diminish is the potential for you and your learners to grow in conscience together. What aspects of your student interactions give you the most hope? The most joy? What builds trusting relationships? These are why we do what we do, even as our jobs have now surpassed stress levels of air traffic controllers! Keeping these in mind when things get hard can sustain us when things get bleak or when student needs overwhelm us.

How we lift up our union siblings, whether they are REA, RESP, RPTA, AFT, SEIU, RPA or Teamsters, is a deep source of strength and fortitude. What do you do to celebrate our colleagues? REA wants to hear your ideas! [Use this google form](#) to share acts of camaraderie and celebrate the acts of kindness and generosity at your site. It is through reliance on each other, no matter our role, that we avoid burnout and, dare I say, look forward to work each day.

Kent Education Association's strike is a stark reminder of how hard fought battles between unions and the bosses continue in our own backyards. While educators in REA have a solid and positive working relationship with RSD admin, we also know that we must not let the needs of our community go unaddressed. Poverty, climate change, racism and oppression march on in America and unions will play a foundational role in building the solutions to these problems only IF WE ORGANIZE FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE WORKING CLASS TO CREATE A SOCIETY OF CARING FOR EACH OTHER.

It is only the **labor** of workers that creates all wealth. Educators create the workers of our future economy and we must not isolate ourselves from the broader labor movement. As long as Jeff Bezos earns \$150,000 every 60 seconds he is alive, justice for the most vulnerable will not be realized.

REA has been a member of the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Council for the past two years. In that time our delegates to MLKLC have built ties to

other trades and other educator unions in our region. We've built new political endorsement processes and held electeds accountable. We've supported striking workers in various ways. We've sponsored a cross labor forum and built deeper understanding about the old saying 'an injury to one is an injury to all'.

In fact it was MLKLC that sent your elected REA delegates the request to support striking KEA members by messaging the school board and superintendent [through this link](#). PLEASE take a minute to communicate your support for Kent educators! Especially if you live in Kent, your words can go a long way to show the anti-union bosses which side the community is on. Check out a couple of videos about the strike: [This one](#) and [this one](#).

While our union siblings in Kent need our support, it is possible Seattle EA members will too as their strike authorization vote is coming soon. While we won HISTORIC gains in our contract we must coordinate with our neighbors for the good of everyone in our school system. REA is proudly donating fruit for KEA members to enjoy at their BBQ tomorrow and we will continue to help Kent and Seattle however we can.

Intersectional Unionism

This year I will be hosting general membership meet ups (via zoom) focused on critical issues that may seem to some to be outside the narrow scope of public education. However our state and national affiliates (WEA & NEA, respectively) have unequivocal progressive stances on all of these topics. I hope many of you will want to learn more about and strategize around:

- Climate justice (through societal activism and intersectionality with the movement and our educational goals for students)
- Anti-racism (ranging from a broad community justice lens to school building-based equity teams)
- LGBTQ+ and gender spectrum rights (from the global to the classroom level)
- Health care & reproductive rights
- Immigrant solidarity

- Rent Control, progressive taxation & Public Banking
- Safety from violence in all its forms

These events will be open conversations that I hope will lead to a sense of empowerment and agency. Educators are uniquely positioned to take these issues on and whatever comes from these talks is OURS. REA will continue to focus our resources on direct service to members through bargaining strong contracts, helping members in need of disciplinary representation, safety in the workplace, grievances, advocacy, professional rights, retention of staff and democratized decision-making at all levels. But in doing this work we can't lose sight of what is happening 'out there' in the world. We have credibility when we speak up. We have power to incite real change if we choose to exercise it and coordinate with other community groups, other unions and elected leaders.

We have a moral imperative to walk the walk for the young people we are privileged to work with. If not us, who? If not now, when?

Member Leaders

Your building reps will be receiving a packet of materials to post on your REA Bulletin Boards. Reps will be trained this fall/winter on labor management, contract enforcement/grievances and solving problems at the lowest level possible. Even if you aren't an official building rep, did you know that you can be a ROC building leader? REA's Organizing Committee is seeking members ready to be a support in all kinds of ways. Your reps will thank you! Email mfigge1987@gmail.com to learn more.

Committees are often where initiatives are planned and carried out. We have so much potential to do incredibly impactful work to improve morale, student learning outcomes and community support as our committee chairs are ready to work with you! Meeting schedules are being set up now, most will meet virtually monthly.

Email Julianna to learn more and/or get connected to these work groups:

Racial & Social Justice Committee
ROC (REA Organizing Committee)
PAC (Political Action Committee)

Safety Committee
Grievance Committee
Social Events Committee
Constitution & Bylaws Committee
Nominations & Elections

The makeup of REA's Executive Board has some changes coming. Because of members changing jobs we have some vacancies that will be filled with appointed members that rep council confirms. ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND ALL REA MEETINGS! Only elected reps can vote on motions but debate is open to every member. If you wish to join a virtual rep council, email us for the link. Our in-person rep councils will be held Nov. 7, March 10, and June 5th, location for each is still TBD. Food is provided to elected reps at in-person meetings and we will order food for a limited number of member guests who RSVP early!

Contractually Speaking....

If you haven't reviewed the summary document of our bargaining achievements, we encourage you to do so. [Here's the link.](#) Your bargaining team will continue to support implementation of the contract and MOUs and you can too!

We bargained a number of ways to further democratize our workplaces to have oversight and authentic input on programs in RSD.

Read [pages 192-201 of our contract](#) for more details on each of the workgroups.

We need members to serve on a number of these newly bargained work groups and task forces that elevate the voices and expertise of YOU, the professional experts on topics like:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Special Education ILC staffing processes
- SEL support team
- Evaluation Pilot on new OSPI Student Growth Goals (this would only apply if your building is entering into the pilot)
- Building based leadership roles and stipends
- Multi-Lingual (formerly called ELL & ESL) program review

- Multi-Lingual state-testing WIDA scheduling

School Board Accountability

Our elected school board directors can better support educators if they are given the path to do so. Every two weeks they meet to hear updates on district initiatives, set priorities, approve budgets and adopt policies. **THEY NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS!** Learn more about how to attend meetings, [read agendas and more here.](#)

To build up member turnout, each building will be designated a meeting for you to attend. We will be asking members to report out what was surprising, hopeful, concerning or empowering from each meeting. These reports will go into a new section of our bi-monthly newsletter called 'Voices from the Field'. In addition to holding space at school board meetings, we will be asking you what is your 'Question of the Month' that REA will either answer or ask of someone who makes decisions for schools. More on this next time!

Substitutes

If you haven't yet read all of the incredible gains we won in bargaining for substitutes, know that Renton is the **FIRST LOCAL** in the state to pay for health insurance (SEBB) benefits on **DAY ONE** of a sub working (if they are hired by Oct. 15 and commit to working at least 90 days or 630 hours over the course of the year). We also dramatically increased sub pay and now have clear language on what kinds of supports subs should receive at every school.

We know there will still be unfilled positions. In our new CBA we refined our 'Substitute Rotation' to be more equitable to our members who are best equipped to cover. We shared RSD's interest in compensating members generously for volunteering to cover for an unfilled sub absence (you will earn 1.5 times the per diem hourly pay of our **HIGHEST PAID MEMBER** who has a Master's Degree and 90+ credits which is ~\$135/hour! This is the highest in the state as far as we know!) If you are **REQUIRED** to sub (meaning you are called up when the sub rotation is

needed), you will be paid per diem of the highest pay rate which = \$90/hour). Because of events in January 2022 causing many of you to be forced to cover WAAAAAY too much, we bargained a LIMIT for how many times a member can be required to sub if they are called to do so via the rotation (this limit is three C&P periods per week). Volunteering doesn't count for this limit but we did bargain language that your sub rotation MUST BE ACCESSIBLE to you at all times. Read more about the sub rotation on [page 97 of the CBA](#).

Social Emotional & Behavior Supports

During bargaining we were able to add two SOCIAL WORKERS to our district work force to provide access to resources for families in need of basic services. Many districts rely on social workers to support special education, multi-lingual supports and are a lifeline to connect families to counseling and legal services. In addition to working with school counselors and family liaisons, they will be part of our new social emotional support team that will be deployed to buildings when a student's needs have surpassed what the building can provide. There is a process to access this SEL team, of course. Check out pages [85-87 of our CBA](#) to learn more.

We all have mental health needs that fluctuate during our lives. The pandemic, war, eco-grief, oppression and trauma of all kinds can be especially difficult to navigate when we so often give our all to kids. REA worked with RSD last spring to engage a new program that provides ALL EMPLOYEES access to counseling and many other services to improve your quality of life. The link to enroll in [Canopy services is here](#). Please use this free resource! Canopy service providers can be called into buildings following traumatic events in addition to supporting YOU directly, as a human being navigating life these days.

Take time for yourself this Labor Day weekend. We comprise the hardest working profession on earth and YOUR UNION STANDS WITH YOU each and every day.

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For concerns related to Special Education in RSD, email specialeducationrea@gmail.com