



we2.0

Washington Education Association  
Volume 61, Number 2 – Spring 2023

## Spreading the ESP word

*Congratulations to Renton's Aneeka Ferrell, WEA's  
2023 Education Support Professional of the Year*



# Together again, members chart a course for WEA's future

Words cannot express how exciting it was to join 800 WEA members IN-PERSON in Spokane last April for our 2023 WEA Representative Assembly (RA). Following two years



WEA President Larry Delaney addresses nearly 1,000 delegates in person at this year's Representative Assembly in Spokane. Among this year's RA business, delegates re-elected Delaney and Vice President Janie White to lead WEA for three more years.

of virtual RAs, the return to Spokane of our annual meeting filled my cup and then some. If you were a delegate, thank you. If you were not, know that you were well represented.

For those not familiar with RA,

our annual Representative Assembly is a meeting of democratically elected WEA members from across the state who set the direction for WEA for the coming year. RA provides an opportunity for WEA members — just like you — to determine the work that our union will carry forward. This year, RA delegates considered over 60 new business items, new and continuing resolutions, and WEA constitution and bylaws amendments. For the sake of space and time, I would like to highlight just a few of the business items that were on the floor for consideration. *You can find a complete list of RA business items by scanning the QR code at left with your phone or by typing the link into a browser.*

Many of the items before the body for consideration were related to our legislative priorities in Olympia, and delegates gave very clear directions to our Legislative Strategy Committee. In the 2024 legislative session, we must continue to fight for the full funding of special education. We must ensure that a greater number of ESPs are funded through state dollars and that all ESPs and CTC faculty earn a professional and living wage. And lastly, but most importantly, we must work to develop solutions that will address the increasing incidents of disrupted learning taking place in classrooms and worksites across the state. These will not be the sole focus in 2024, but special-education funding, high-impact

student behavior and living wages must remain priorities until our goals are achieved.

In addition to new business items, delegates also considered several WEA bylaws amendments, including an amendment to reset the multiplier used to calculate certificated dues to 0.00775, the factor that was used in 2018. Debate on this amendment was robust, and delegates knew that with minimal projected membership growth, a small ESP dues increase, and maintaining our current program and services, WEA's three-year financial outlook showed annual shortfalls of \$4 million, \$5.1 million and \$5.9 million. Delegates also knew that since 2016, the average statewide certificated salary, which is used to determine our certificated dues, has increased by 52%. And, based on the January 2023 WEA member poll, 80% of WEA members value the support and services provided through WEA. Concerns were shared about the impact that an increase in dues would have on members and the impact that not increasing dues would have on WEA's ability to provide the supports and services that our members have come to expect. When the results of the secret ballot vote were tallied, the bylaws amendment passed with a 74% yes vote.

In addition, through debate and floor votes, our delegates reaffirmed WEA's commitment to racial, social and economic justice and made it clear that although this work is a priority for our union moving forward, it cannot be siloed. It must be woven into all that we do as a union.

If you were a delegate, once again, thank you. If you submitted a business item, thank you. If you brought your voice into the room, thank you. If you did not attend and are interested in attending in 2024, check with your local to see about the delegate election process.

Thank you all for the work that you continue to do on a daily basis.

Forward together,



[wea.mobi/2023WEARAActions](https://wea.mobi/2023WEARAActions)

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Aneeka Ferrell

*'I realized that my voice and participation in this year's session are instrumental in seeing progression not only for students in my small rural school district but all students in every district.'*

— Annalisa Hiroyasu

## More Leaders, More Progress

*Educators step up in Olympia and make a big difference*

Ensuring our state fulfills its duty to provide a high-quality public education to every student takes constant advocacy and across the state, WEA members are speaking up for students, schools and colleges. Thousands of WEA member-advocates

testified, visited lawmakers, wrote emails and organized fellow educators, and it shows in what we accomplished together in the 2023 legislative session.

Annalisa Hiroyasu, a STEM and PE teacher at Coupeville Elementary School and member of Coupeville EA, attended



Members from around the state attended PoliSparks this year to refine their skills around advocating in the legislature.

PoliSparks, an annual training for members interested in refining their skills around advocating in the legislature, along with the annual WEA Lobby Day. She brought her unique perspective as an educator in a smaller district to Olympia, remarking, "I realized that my voice and participation in this year's session are instrumental in seeing progression not only for students in my small rural school district but all students in every district."

During lobby day, she joined allies on a panel for reporters about the need for Special Education funding. The panel got the attention of three television stations and educated thousands of news

viewers about what our students with disabilities need.

"I walked away from this session realizing how small conversations can have a big impact on the progress of education," Hiroyasu said. "Seeing how many locals came and worked together inspired me to seek out more opportunities to learn how to use my voice to be involved and make an impact."



Otis Golden

Otis Golden, a Special Education paraeducator at Rainier Beach High School who served on the Seattle EA contract bargaining team, saw taking action in Olympia as a natural next step to his advocacy for his students and colleagues. Golden was one of many educators whose advocacy helped increase funding for Special Education by \$371 million.

"Once I got involved in bargaining it got me on the path of seeing how much change I can make," he said. "If I can make change in legislative session, I could impact so many more schools and more districts along with my own students."

Golden also attended PoliSparks. While participating in a scavenger hunt at the Capitol, he noted how many people and names he recognized.

"I saw Gov. Inslee's office and I went to the same high school as him," Golden said. "And I saw Superintendent Reykdal and our Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Jones and I know both of them. It made me feel at home."

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**You can  
make a  
difference!**

Join WEA-PAC:  
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Twitter

Ask your local  
union or council  
leaders about  
opportunities to  
get more involved!







## A platform to share the experiences of all ESPs

*Congratulations to Renton School District Recruitment Coordinator Aneeka Ferrell, 2023 WEA Education Support Professional of the Year*

2023 Washington Education Association Education Support Professional of the Year Aneeka Ferrell hopes to use her platform to share the experiences of ESPs. “I’m speaking for all ESPs,” she said. “I hope to spread the word of ESPs, what we need, what we deserve and how we should be treated as equals.”

“Disparities exist,” she explained. At the 2023 WEA Representative Assembly, Ferrell shared that according to the National Education Association, on average ESPs earn \$10,000 below a basic living wage in all but one state across the country, including Washington state.

As the Recruitment Coordinator for Renton School District, Ferrell recognizes that her position is one that is compensated more equitably. She feels that should be the case for all ESPs. “We shouldn’t

have to fight to get to the same level as other individuals,” she said. “We shouldn’t have to work harder to have an outcome that is equitable. We should be able to show up exactly as we are and be appreciated.”



*Ferrell works with colleagues in Renton and across the nation recognize and challenge their attitudes, predispositions and stereotypes on race, gender, disabilities and more.*

Despite earning less than equitable wages, ESPs continue to show up and provide hope for students

with empathy, care and love. This is why, she said, “we demand fair and equitable wages and to be able



to live without working two, three, four or five jobs. We demand to be treated like any other professional in education because we are educators.”

According to Ferrell, in addition to equitable pay, education and mentoring are critical for elevating ESPs.

Ferrell is currently a cadre member in WEA's NAKIA Academy, a coaching and mentoring program designed for educators of color. She called on decisionmakers to “provide ESPs with the professional development we deserve.” She also asked for affinity spaces, in which ESPs can safely discuss the issues they face and provide one another with tools and knowledge through coaching and mentoring.

As for the award, Ferrell shared that it has been a humbling and amazing experience. Receiving this award has shown Ferrell that her work as an ESP and as Vice President of the Renton Professional Technical Association is appreciated. “The work that I am doing as an educator in Washington state, on behalf of ESPs across the state is making a difference. People have recognized the passion that I have as an ESP, as an advocate, and in being intentional and authentic in the relationships that I've built,” she said.

Ferrell hopes her advocacy has an impact on the overall success of all ESPs and that she can be a role model for students.

As an educator of color and as a Black woman especially, Ferrell said that being selected as the WEA ESP of the Year shows students they can achieve. “Our most marginalized students, our students of color don't always see themselves reflected in their education” she said.

In her community, 78% of educators are white women, while over 80% of students are students of color. “It's hard to see yourself in spaces you are



Aneeka Ferrell serves as a core team member of the Rainier Educators of Color Network in the Rainier UniServ Council. She also is a certified trainer for WEA in the areas of implicit bias and the fundamental courses of study as it relates to equity. She shares the importance of recognizing and challenging biases in an episode on NEA's School Me podcast at [wea.mobi/SchoolMe](http://wea.mobi/SchoolMe)

not,” she explained. This is why her message to students is to show up and to be unapologetically themselves. “Don't let anyone change you,” she said. “You are individuals and each individual comes with diverse experiences and backgrounds, and you should be appreciated and supported as you are, not challenged or changed.”

*‘We shouldn't have to work harder to have an outcome that is equitable. We should be able to show up exactly as we are and be appreciated.’*

— Aneeka Ferrell

ESPs are instrumental in supporting students to fully be themselves. But to be fully present for students, ESPs must be treated as professionals, Ferrell explained. She called on her fellow ESPs to continue to strive to do their best and to work together to make change.

“We're going to grow together and build together,” Ferrell said. It is only together that ESPs can achieve, she explained. “If we continue to collectively work in the ways that we are, be who we need to be, and use our voices to challenge and infiltrate systems, we can make change.”

Ferrell's message is clear. “We as ESPs will continue to advocate and push for legislation to be treated as equals, because that is what we deserve and are entitled to. We are educators, too.”

Watch Aneeka Ferrell on the job at [wea.mobi/aneeka](http://wea.mobi/aneeka)



*Ferrell sees opportunities to create more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces and to reduce bias in attitudes and behaviors as a recruitment coordinator for Renton schools.*





# It's too darn hot [to learn]

United in WEA, educators across the state advocate tirelessly for what our students need. When the temperatures climbed over 80 degrees this May, many of our buildings saw high temperatures that made it unsafe to teach and learn. WEA members quickly raised our voices and brought attention to the need for air conditioning in our buildings.



*Puyallup teacher Caitlin Bolster shares a temperature reading at her school on May 18.*

When the high temperature hit 88 degrees on May 15, Federal Way EA president Shannon McCann's phone was flooded with pictures of classroom thermostats.

"Educators reported their students were getting sick, they were getting sick, that teaching and learning were impossible in rooms reaching 90 degrees," said McCann. "And some educators noted their students were taking state standardized tests in 80 degrees-plus. It's setting us all up for failure."

Across the state, educators were plugging in fans, turning off lights and closing blinds in hopes of holding the heat down.

Puyallup EA member Caitlin Bolster reported 88 degrees in her room, noting, "The district put out a

communication that due to lack of funding, it will be a yearslong process to fix the HVAC systems. They also told us we are not allowed to use portable AC units due to possible outages and other issues."

Lawmakers, administrators, educators and students agree that we need to improve HVAC and ensure air conditioning in every classroom. It's no surprise that districts need additional funding to make the improvements. A combination of inadequate state funding for capital improvements plus a 60% passage threshold for bonds makes local funding more difficult. That leaves many districts struggling to find funds for HVAC.

"My classroom has AC (I'm in Eastern WA), but it is broken more often than not and parts for the old system are hard to come by and very expensive," said Caitlin Tumlinson, president of Nine Mile Falls EA. "Because of the supermajority required to pass a bond, we cannot get our failing building replaced — the burden would be too high on our local taxpayers. The state must act to support districts to keep our classrooms safe and comfortable for our students!"

The first step toward change is making sure our communities see the urgency of addressing HVAC needs. Please continue to share thermostat photos (email to [WEA@WashingtonEA.org](mailto:WEA@WashingtonEA.org)) and speak out about the need to keep kids cool and safe.

## RA delegates choose to build a stronger WEA

**A**s we face challenges in our fight for our students and our families, WEA members are uniting to make sure our union stays strong.

Elected delegates at the Representative Assembly (RA) in April voted to adjust WEA certificated dues from 0.007 to 0.00775 times the statewide average teacher salary. After debating the issue, we chose to increase our commitment to build a brighter future for our state as we continue the fight for smaller classes, more student supports and adequate funding.

Together we've won billions in funding for schools and colleges, respect for ESPs, more inclusive and equitable schools and more.

Together in our union we work toward our vision through:

- ▶ **Member-led professional development** that builds our skills to support students and one another.
- ▶ **Leadership development and collaboration** that ensures we're being treated with respect and have a seat at the table to make a difference.
- ▶ **Contract bargaining support and advocacy** that hold districts accountable to better support our students and treat us with respect.
- ▶ **A strong voice with education leadership** from school boards to the state superintendent to ensure our state continues to support just and equitable schools.

## New law protects personal info of domestic violence survivors from public view

Due in large part to WEA's advocacy, the Washington State Legislature created a new statutory exemption from the Public Records Act for workplace information of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or harassment in **Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1533**. The new law became effective on May 15.

If you or your dependent is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or harassment, **you can take advantage of the protections offered by ESHB 1533** by submitting the following to your employer:

A. A signed, dated, sworn statement stating:

1. it was "signed under penalty of perjury" and includes the name of the city where you are signing;
2. that you or your dependent is a survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or harassment;
3. why you have a reasonable basis to believe that the risk is continuing; and
4. sufficient information so that your employer can verify your statement. Identify the perpetrator(s) by name, photo if possible, or provide a police report, protection order or other documentation of the allegations.

OR

B. Documentation that shows that you or your dependent participate in the address confidentiality program under chapter 40.24 RCW.

Please note the documentation that you submit to your employer is exempt from public disclosure. Your exemption will expire after two years but may be renewed by providing a new sworn statement to your employer.

Contact your employer with questions.

Sample letter to employer at [wea.mobi/ESHB1533](http://wea.mobi/ESHB1533)



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## LEADERS from Page 3

North Thurston EA third-grade teacher Maribel Vilchez has been linking what happens in the classroom to what happens in Olympia for a while — she serves on the Professional Educator Standards Board. This session, she stepped up in a new way and testified in favor of a bill that would increase access to multi-lingual education.

“It surprised me that particularly on the bill I testified (HB 1228), it did not have any testimonials against the content,” Vilchez shared. “That led me to believe that more people are aware of the importance of multilingual education, but more so of multiliteracy. It is my hope that by sharing about my experience, legislators will be curious and would want to know more to make more informed decisions when allocating funds and/or setting policies.”

Hiroyasu, Golden, Vilchez and thousands of WEA educators together won additional Special Education funding, \$2.1 billion in additional funds for educator compensation, increased access to free K-12 school meals, and 30 minutes of guaranteed recess for every elementary student.

Vilchez stressed that legislative advocacy is something every educator can do, and it’s critical to raise educators’ voices.

“I am aware the budgets are and may continue to be tight, but this advocacy will hopefully persuade other educators to be the voice of their students so we can provide the financial and human resources needed to make programs successful.”



Left to right: Seattle EA members and leaders Marla Rasmussen, Liz Ruiz-Puyana and Joaquín Rodríguez visit legislators including Rep. Julia Reed during WEA Lobby Day.

## Best of the best

Hats off to WEA Chinook’s Pamella Johnson, NEA’s 2023 Education Support Professional of the Year.

As NEA’s ESP of the Year, Johnson will serve as an ambassador for ESPs across the country, speaking about the work and importance of ESPs at local, state and national events. Her selection was announced earlier this year at the NEA ESP Conference held in Seattle where WEA had 140 ESP members in attendance.

Johnson, a member of the Rochester ESP, takes pride in being nationally selected. However, she feels especially proud knowing that she is representing the quality of educators in Washington and the nation, she says.



“She is relentless in her commitment to ensuring students’ emotional needs are being met, something that is critically important, yet often overlooked in education systems,” NEA President Becky Pringle said of Johnson at the March 25 ceremony in Seattle.

Since 2012, Johnson has worked tirelessly as a behavioral interventionist at Rochester High School in Rochester to ensure students’ social and emotional needs are met. She provides advocacy and establishes effective and culturally responsive pathways for students to communicate with their teachers and other adults. This is not only effective to their learning process but a valuable life skill.

Johnson is equally active outside the classroom. She is a track coach, a lead ESP trainer for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Classroom Management courses in Washington state and is a member on a statewide board that establishes requirements and makes recommendations for paraeducator professional development and advancement. As the only Black female member from a small and rural local, Johnson represents many voices at the state and national level that are often overlooked or silenced.

“It is my goal to make sure that the small rural voice is heard, listened to and that we have a seat at the table,” she says. “Furthermore, my vision is to bring other BIPOC and ESP members into the conversation through committee work and one on one connections. As a leader, my goal is to empower my colleagues as I do my students.”