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The most important thing our local union does is negotiate for better wages and benefits, and make sure our contract is enforced. Our united membership has the power to protect our rights and to fight for our students.
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# Make it an awesome school year

For me, the start of a new school year has always been filled with hope and nervous anticipation. As an elementary student, I remember laying out my first-day clothes, and remember how difficult it was to fall asleep the night before. I walked to my elementary school and the day before school I was on the phone with my best friend making sure that we had a plan to get to school early enough to be one of the first to see the class lists.

As an educator, I brought that same nervous energy with me to the first day. Is my classroom ready? What am I going to wear? And I need to have enough time to get coffee on the way to school.

Throughout my teaching career, the start of the school year meant planning first-week lesson plans that would build community in my classroom and get students excited about math — or, at least tolerate it. I knew that I only had one opportunity to make that first impression, and I wanted my students to have that same excitement that I did so many years ago.

Whether you are a first-year educator or have a few years under your belt, I bet that you have those back-to-school jitters and are as anxious as I was to make that first impression. Regardless of your role in public education, you are in a people business, and connecting with students is what we do. Our work matters because we educate everyone. Regardless of our students' race, gender, economic status or family background, we provide our students a safe space where they can learn, grow and thrive.

This work is not easy, but when those magical moments happen — as they do for all educators — there is no better job in the world. And when

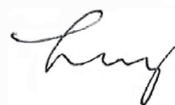
challenges occur — as they often do — we know that we have the power of our union to support us.

As a WEA member, you have 90,000 fellow educators standing behind you who believe in our shared mission and who support the work that you do. And through your union you have a vast array of professional supports, a voice in shaping policy issues in Olympia, shared strength through collective bargaining and a community that shares your passion for helping students succeed.

To that end, WEA has created a Member Resource Guide that will provide you all the ways in which your union can help you to be your best in your work with students. Scan the QR code with your phone (or visit <https://wea.mobi/MGR>) and save this valuable resource. I suspect that you will want to refer to it regularly.

Thank you for choosing to be an educator.

Now, get your clothes ready, pack your lunch, and have a great school year.



Larry Delaney  
WEA President



Larry Delaney



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# The Union Solidarity Difference

Solidarity can shift the tone and success of a bargain. With the support of UniServ directors, state-based organizers, and through the leadership of local governance, members across the state mobilized to support their bargaining teams. These three locals are only a small snapshot of what can be accomplished when members act in unity through rallies, speaking up at school board meetings, participating in informational picketing, and simply showing up. When we work as one, we win! This is the union solidarity difference.



## Medical Lake

"The 2022 bargain was the longest, hardest, and most contentious one that we've ever had in Medical Lake, but the way that the members stood together to advocate for the needs of our students was the best thing that I've ever been a part of in my time as a union member. We couldn't have done it without support from our community, our union brothers and sisters, and the WEA writ large — it was great to see how it can all come together into a win!"

— Ryan Grant, Medical Lake EA President

### GAINS!

- 5.5% increase to the base salary for the 2023-24 school year (IPD is 3.7%)
- 4% increase to the base salary for the 2024-25 school year plus an additional \$50 in VEBA account
- Added 5 days for SpEd Staff for the work that must be done outside the school day
- New language on Special Education caseload and class size limit
- Protected class size for middle school classes
- More specific overload language
- Staff with a doctoral or equivalent degree will receive an additional stipend of \$5,000 per year.

*These three locals are only a small snapshot of what can be accomplished when members act in unity...*



## Nine Mile Falls

"Our bargaining team can't thank our members enough for the way they showed up and supported us last year. Their actions really proved that our membership trusts our bargaining team and showed the district how powerful collective action by our membership can be. It completely changed the tone of this year's bargain, and we were able to reach an agreement that is fair, respectful, and meets the needs of our students and our members more quickly than in any bargain since before McCleary!"

— Caitlin Tumlinson, Nine Mile Falls EA President

### GAINS!

- 6.5% to 9.25% increase to the base salary plus 1% attract and retain stipend across the board for the 2022-23 school year
- 5% increase to the base salary for the 2023-24 school year (IPD is 3.7%) and 5% increase to the base salary for the 2024-25 school year (IPD is projected to be 3.9%)
- Increase in compensation for our SpEd teachers for the work that must be done outside the school day
- Added days for supplemental contract for ESA, including counselors, psychologist, SLPs, nurses
- Tripled the compensation for early notice of retirement
- Added language to have employees provide input on their assignment preferences each spring to be considered as part of the annual staffing process
- Support for training for new curriculum, or compensation to create curriculum when none is provided



## Wahkiakum

"Over the last 10 years, we had always been able to reach an agreement without formal negotiations. When we saw that our paraeducators and food service workers were making minimum wage, we knew that we needed to take a different approach. It came to the point where people were struggling to feed their families. It was only through collective action that we were able to get the district to take us seriously at the bargaining table. Our members conducted one-on-one conversations, engaged the local community as well as elected officials, and did informational picketing and rallies. Our certificated staff supported us at these rallies, which led to the staff within the District being more unified regardless of their classification."

— Haannah Ohrberg, Wahkiakum ESP President

### GAINS!

- 10.5% average increase in 2022-23 (range: 6.9% - 17.0%, represents flat \$2/hr increase for most positions but \$2.58/hr for paras and food service retroactive to Jan. 1, 2023)
- Not included in % is \$300 one-time stipend plus additional holidays phased in future years for less than 6-hour-per-day employees
- State inflationary adjustment in 2023-24 and 2024-25
- Revised SEBB language
- Can cash out their 1 day of personal leave if unused; clarification of bus-driver provisions; required bus-driver training paid at regular rate (not standby rate); extracurricular bus-trip provisions; updated grievance and arbitration language





Parent Joanne Griesemer:  
“Whether Mr. Said is teaching a class lesson, meeting with a small group, or counseling one-on-one, he is inspirational. You’ll see kids leaving with smiles whenever they interact with him and families magically transition from high anxiety to zen after they’ve had a conversation with him. ... Every day, Mr. Said consistently comforts, counsels, and cultivates our school community.”

## Congratulations to Seattle’s Said Ahmed, 2023 WEA Education Staff Associate of the Year

Said Ahmed, 2023 WEA Education Staff Associate of the Year, wants decision-makers to recognize the vital role ESAs play in “helping students navigate the complexities of school and life.”

“Since the pandemic, our roles have grown in visibility and people see our value,” says Ahmed, a school counselor at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School in Seattle. “Since we’ve engaged more with SEL, our role has become more apparent.”

While Ahmed’s school has a long history of having a counselor serving students, many schools still do not have counselors. “Decision-makers should support having counselors in every school and work to understand our role with students,” he says.

Ahmed credits the award with expanding his reach, which has allowed him to share his work with decision-makers. Being ESA of the Year has also increased his access to outside resources he can bring into the school to support students. This year, he has arranged for an expert in working with children and families dealing with trauma who will do “healing circles and visual arts and will be helping build a sense of community in the classrooms.”

Of Ahmed, his colleagues say he is instrumental in creating a welcoming school climate.

“As a fluent speaker of Somali, Mr. Said understands and prioritizes the complex cultural needs of our families and students,” says Nick Dillon, a Special Education

*‘I wish we could replicate Mr. Said in every school. He is a role model and students care deeply for him.’*

— Joanne Griesemer



Teacher and Seattle EA building representative at Bailey Gatzert. “He is devoted to celebrating diverse cultures and multilingual populations.”

Ahmed cares for the students he serves like they are his own.

“He consistently checks in with families after hours,” explains Joanne Griesemer, a parent and Family Partner Leader at Bailey Gatzert. “I wish we could replicate Mr. Said in every school. He is a role model and students care deeply for him.”

Ahmed says it is the relationships he builds with students, and the memories they make together that he cherishes most in his role. “I am honored to be their counselor,” he says of the students. “I am so thankful to them for being wonderful learners.”

“The relationship between educator or counselor, or whatever role an adult plays in the school, is pure and highly inspirational.” Ahmed believes these relationships are built on mutual respect and warrants this shared respect for receiving the award. “To me it feels like I have the respect of my community and that I collaborated with my colleagues, students, and families, to create a school culture of respect and connection,” he says.

In addition to his commitment to his school,

Ahmed is active in his union, serving as a Seattle EA building representative.

“It is important to become a full member to have a voice,” he says. “The union gives us a voice in the legislature and helps us to have better pay and working conditions.”

Outside of school, Ahmed is inspired by nature and recently took his family to Mount Rainier. “Nature has a unique way of captivating us like nothing else,” says Ahmed. “It has a calming presence. It has a life-giving energy and helps alleviate our stress.”

Ahmed is humbled by the recognition he has received through this award and notes the importance of this type of recognition for students.

“It’s good for students to see individuals who look like them getting recognized for their work,” he says. “The award recognizes the individuals who have contributed to the community they serve and helps others in the community see that contribution and hard work will be rewarded.

“The best thing about the award is the whole school coming together to celebrate and be recognized, and it’s an award for all ESAs across the district.”



Go to school with Said Ahmed and see his influence at Bailey Gatzert Elementary School in Seattle. Watch at <https://wea.mobi/said>



*‘The relationship between educator or counselor, or whatever role an adult plays in the school, is pure and highly inspirational.’*

— Said Ahmed  
Seattle EA



# Vote as if your students are depending on you! (They are.)

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 7

As our schools settle back into their classroom routines, it's also time to start thinking about the upcoming general election and what it means for our students and our communities.

Elected officials play a huge part in how our schools are funded and how they run. Moms for Liberty and other opponents of students' freedom to learn and educators' expertise have seen this and are trying to take over. School boards and state legislative seats are especially critical, even though they receive less media coverage than national offices or controversial ballot measures.

Across the state, wildly unqualified candidates are running for our school boards and other elected offices because they know these seats will give them the power to enact their personal agendas.

Whether it's ensuring all students are welcomed and supported, protecting students' freedom to learn true history and read books that reflect our diverse experiences, or even learn accurate science, it's up to us to vote and remind our communities to vote to support high-quality education for our students. As WEA members, we use our votes to forward public education and our students' futures.

You can also contact your local union officers if you'd like to volunteer to help talk with others in your area about the election. Educators are trusted voices in our communities, and many people simply don't know what's at stake.

Please do what you can to help. Our students depend on us.



**Looking for election guidance? Check out WEA-PAC's endorsement page.** Candidates seeking endorsement fill out a questionnaire and participate in an interview with educators like you in WEA-PAC, who then recommend pro-labor, pro-public education candidates who express support for us and our students. You can find recommendations at <https://wea.mobi/voter23> or by scanning this QR code with your phone.



**Registering to vote or tracking your ballot?** Go to <https://wea.mobi/ballot23> or scan this QR code with your phone.



**Need a ballot drop box?** Find one at <http://wea.mobi/4502806> or scan this QR code with your phone.

## Supporting future teachers to build an inclusive workforce

Educators know that our students learn best when they see their life experiences reflected in front of the classroom. That's why together in our union we're stepping up to build a more inclusive educator workforce, raising \$10 million in the next 10 years to support a diverse cohort of aspiring educators. The new program kicks off this fall when education students at Western Washington University's Woodring College of Education can apply for scholarships of \$5,000 or more to make teaching more accessible.

### Who qualifies for the WEA scholarships?

The bylaws language establishes a \$1 per month per active member special assessment for 10 years for the purpose of establishing scholarships for BIPOC individuals who are going into public education. As an initial step in implementing that special assessment, WEA is setting up partnerships with universities.

### What colleges offer WEA scholarships?

Right now, Western Washington University offers the scholarship. WEA hopes to announce additional partners very soon.

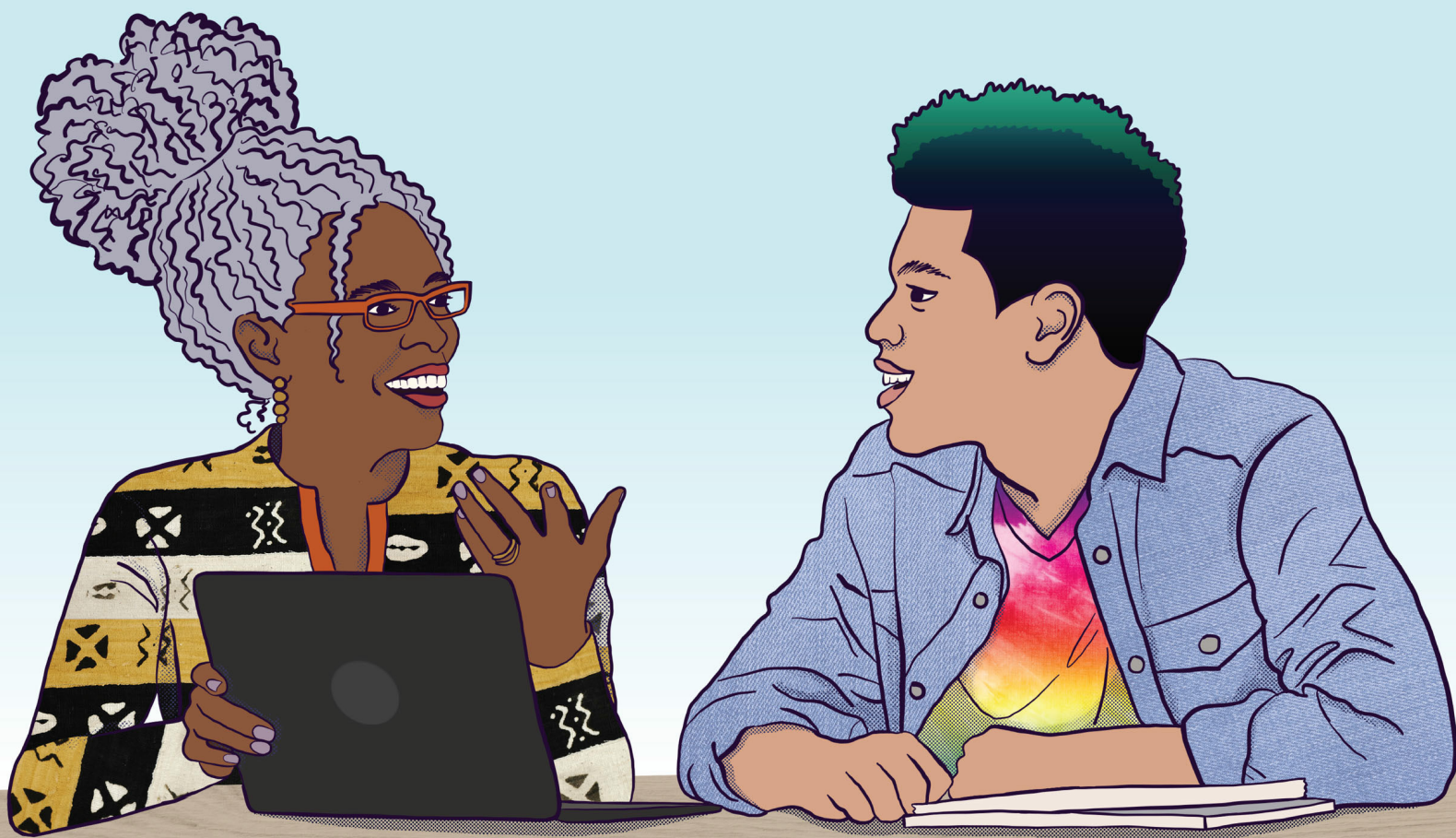
"I know for me, growing up as a first-generation U.S. citizen, I did not always have all of the generational knowledge needed to easily make my way through the university system, nor did I always have the financial ability," shared Pamela Sepúlveda Wilson, a teacher, NEA and WEA Director, and Northshore EA member. "What the scholarships could provide is some of that change to the broken structures and systems that we have in place that continue to marginalize students, educators, future educators and it will help support an increase in diversity in our schools."

Elected WEA delegates voted at the 2022 Representative Assembly to create the Washington Education Association Promise Scholarship as a reflection of the union's commitment to our students' success.

The WWU partnership, the fund's first, will support \$1.5 million in scholarships for the next five years — as many as 50 students in its first year alone. Awardees can use the WWU scholarships for any educational expense. The funds can also be used to cover the full cost of in-state tuition for some students. Additionally, the scholarships are available to students for five years, making it possible for awardees to receive financial assistance while student teaching. WEA educators are committed to enhancing the financial awards with additional personal mentorship and support.

"Early on, it was clear that Western Washington University would be an amazing partner for WEA," noted WEA president Larry Delaney. "Everyone that we have worked with at WWU demonstrated clearly the commitment that the university has to racial, social, and economic justice, and I look forward to meeting the first cohort of scholarship recipients later this year."





# You Make *our* School a Better Place



FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT  
<https://wea.mobi/allstudents>







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*Last fall We2.0 featured a story on the Arlington EA's equity team efforts. We wanted to share the strides the team has made — and the impact of the team's work in the district.*



## Members help make change in Arlington

Just a few years after starting, the Arlington Education Association Equity Team is seeing some of the fruits of its labor: In May, the Arlington School Board unanimously supported a resolution to adopt updated Equity Plan language for the district.

AEA Equity Team Chair Denise Wilson described the group's reaction as "overjoyed" at the board's action.

"We are now able to teach our students in a way that not only addresses but celebrates, empowers and honors each of their identities," Wilson said. "Adopting standards around social justice is long overdue and we are thrilled to be a part of that progress here in Arlington."

One of the approved changes means that the district has completed reviewing and considering the Learning for Justice — K-12 Social Justice Standards and is now directing staff to use them to inform their lessons. The other update specifies that diversity and



Arlington EA President Jason Klein, right, discusses a proposal during a team meeting. WEA file photo.

equity awareness activities are expected to include schoolwide and districtwide recognition of heritage and diversity awareness months and observances such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Before the vote, a group of 14 of the AEA Equity Team's 25 members presented to the board in support of the updates. Wilson credited the hard work of each team member for its successes, and also expressed appreciation for the support of district administration.

"We are going to continue working closely with our director of equity, Kerri Helgeson, as well as our superintendent, Dr. Chrys Sweeting, to bring meaningful change to Arlington Public Schools," Wilson said. "This is truly only the beginning."



## Looking for red swag?

The WEA online store is now open 24/7. All items are union made. Check out the merchandise as we continue to add inventory.

Shop at <https://wea.mobi/WEAStore> or scan the QR code.

