



REA Members,

Three days until the shortest and darkest day of the year can surely mean some of us are limited in our energy reserves. Yet we forge ahead to break and seek the light wherever it can be found. What's keeping you hopeful these dark days? May that hope spread to your colleagues, students, families and friends as we all could use more joy and love as 2023 comes to a close.

I'm personally (weirdly?) optimistic about our upcoming legislative session! We have the chance for real progress with new funding and even progress on housing justice and building up the mental health care provider pipeline!



We

I've been visiting many buildings and meeting with workgroups to triage concerns and build our advocacy strategies. I see real progress as your building reps increase rapport with principals and expand the scope of problems we can only solve collaboratively (not to mention preventing new problems from emerging). Please thank your building rep for their efforts; they do a lot behind the scenes to keep your site safe and your rights protected!

As you know we are committed to building up leaders (beyond just 'building reps') amongst rank and file members. I really enjoyed bringing two of our elementary member leaders to the National Council for Urban Education Associations winter conference two weeks ago. They took away new skills and knowledge to support our racial and social justice work and I am bringing to DLT and our superintendent some ideas to begin discussing the idea of Community Schools in our district that came from that conference. We were given insight and updates on NEA's strategic plans, improvements to our high-stakes federal assessment system (SCAN THE QR CODE TO THE RIGHT FOR INFO) and desperately needed funding from Congress for special education.



Speaking of special education: there are some opportunities coming your way in the new year: we are looking for members ready to build a SpEd caucus to work with educators across WA on disability rights. We are also responding to members requesting our own analysis of early literacy curriculum, a review of trimester impacts on high schools, and updates around what our district is doing related to racial and social justice from our recently consolidated DEI task force and RSD committee are on the horizon! Does your school have an equity team? Let us know if you want help figuring out what that can become!

Here's an abbreviated list of things affecting your union siblings:

Behavior/Safety

- Major issues right now include safety concerns at a few buildings with student behaviors on the rise. We know that overloaded class sizes are wearing on many of you, especially at middle schools and Meadow Crest. We know that STUDENT BEHAVIORS are a form of communication and we must go ALL IN in helping each other understand underlying causes and effects of our own behaviors and communication when it comes to building the right Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. We are concerned that not all schools are using our bargained school based team to support members who want help in creating intervention plans for kids. We will address this in our next bargain but in the meantime please be aware of [CBA section 9.5.6](#) and ask questions if you're unsure of processes. If you're not sure how to get compensated for serving in various roles related to SEL or behavior support teams, talk to your building rep.
- REA's Safety Committee leaders regularly meet with RSD leaders to address new and ongoing safety concerns. Our district's Accident Prevention Plan needs updating and we continue to stress the importance of this document's revision; especially in regards to how in-depth and how frequently schools review and practice emergency procedures and student reunification plans. WE HAVE MORE WORK TO DO but have been pleased so far with the collaboration and knowledge of our new Security Director, John Holbrook.
- If you want to support your building's Safety Team, email thomas.walker@rentonschools.us for help!
- We are requesting from RSD that members have more input on purchasing of new equipment and materials as we were not involved in decisions for new blinds and window treatments at many schools. While lockout procedures have changed, we believe we should be involved in the decisions to change window coverings, door locking equipment and communication equipment to assure ALL educators are in contact with office staff in cases of emergency.



Multilingual/English Language Learning Program

- The ML Task Force has just ONE meeting left and we will share the draft of recommendations to strengthen that program with you all very soon. We made big strides forward recently and are using a new protocol to gather input from the task force on specific and realistic changes to our ML program next year AND this will inform our next open bargain as we look at best practices related to caseload, curriculum, co-teaching, coaching, push-in, pull out models and the preparation and support GenEd teachers and ESAs have in transitioning students and providing the best instructional possible for language acquisition. While RSD can do a lot, our state funding system needs to address the real costs of a quality ML/ELL program.
- Talbot Hill was announced as the first school in our district to begin a Dual Language immersion program beginning at kindergarten next year and adding a grade level each year. This is a positive direction for RSD and we are proud to support it. That said, Talbot Hill members have many questions about staffing and changes that come with this transition. We are working with district leaders to address these and will be proposing a few structures to keep communication open and the needs of our educators a top priority so students have the best we can give them in this new program.



Mental Health for Us All!

- We are constantly pushing for broader awareness about the need for mental health support for our students and families. This is a long term endeavor but we are advocating VERY STRONGLY to ensure we have MORE SOCIAL WORKERS going into the future as an initial measure.
- Counselors at high schools are working with us to figure out how to support students when a counselor is on leave. The work doesn't stop and we are hopeful that the incredibly important work of all of our ESAs will continue to be brought to light through our advocacy and organizing.
- We know educators can struggle with feeling watched and judged and this contributes to anxiety and depression for some of us. Even issues with evaluation and the ongoing shortage of paraeducators is a serious problem for many of our SpEd members as we experience compassion fatigue, moral injury and

just plain exhaustion giving everything for our students. Ask for help before taking drastic steps! Call or email your building rep or other union leaders if you're struggling. We are always here to help direct you to resources like our District's [Employee Assistance Program Canopy](#) or other tools for mental wellness available from our health care providers (for example the 'Calm' App is free to Kaiser members and has been well regarded by members who've used it).

Substitutes Deserve More!

- We are ALWAYS recruiting our heroic substitute teachers to join REA and will be asking you all to help in that effort. Our two Substitute REA 'Building' Representatives are pushing the Substitute Concern Reporting Form and we are hosting substitute PD events with Rainier UniServ Council that have so far been well attended and it's been exciting to be part of building camaraderie amongst our subs.
- Please update your sub plans (**especially** seating charts, intervention plans/schedules and student health plans) to ensure our subs have what they need to keep kids engaged in your absence!

Like it or not, Education IS POLITICAL

Last week I began working with a cadre of WEA leaders on building up SPECIFIC Washington state funding solutions to public education. I also met with the deputy state superintendent to discuss what's next for statewide assessment systems. We brought up NEA's campaign to move away from punitive high stakes tests that don't serve the purposes for which they were intended but were told that the state is revising our existing learning standards (including Common Core and the other standards WA has adopted for student learning).

With the help of state Senator Bob Hasegawa and a WEA staffer, I wrote a piece of legislation that calls upon our state legislature to pressure Congress to fully fund IDEA. Read that [Senate Joint Memorial 8007](#) and stay tuned for when it will be heard in the Education Committees in Olympia in January!

In other legislative efforts REA is proud to be a part of, [check out this statement](#) we signed on to with school boards and Associations from 18 districts around the state. Feel free to pass this along to your own representatives to pressure our lawmakers to USE EXISTING FUNDS to increase public school funding! THIS IS DOABLE and would make a real difference!

I continue to keep up with a national IDEA grassroots team that is pushing for litigation against Congress that would require them to meet their obligations to fund special education at least THREE TIMES HIGHER than their current allocations. More on that as we advance those campaigns!

Our legislative at-home meeting was a success. We've been building relationships with lawmakers from the 11th and 33rd districts for many years and they outlined some of their hopes for the upcoming session; from grants for green schools to reducing the cost of Epi-Pens to carbon taxes to building the social worker pipeline to public banking, we have a LOT to look forward to in this upcoming short session. If you're interested in joining me in Olympia for a lobby day, we have funds for release time and I'd love to train more of you on how to navigate our state capitol and engage with the political process!

STAY INFORMED!

Text **ADVOCACY** to 833-258-6815 to get regular legislative and election updates by text message

1. Visit WashingtonEA.org/Advocacy and subscribe to the [advocacy blog](#)
2. Like and follow WEA Advocacy on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)
3. Post using the hashtags #WaEdu and #WaLeg
4. Call your legislator's office. Need your legislator's contact information? [Find it here!](#)
5. Call the Legislative Hotline at 800-562-6000 and leave a message for your lawmakers.



REA Elections Are Coming!

- Check your home mail for a notification of our internal union leadership balloting process!
- Nominations open January 1st and if you're a candidate for REA office, our January 8th Rep Council meeting is your chance to speak directly to members via zoom recording!
- [Here's our full election calendar](#) for this school year. Email reanominationselections@gmail.com with questions!

Raise the Wage Renton: SAVE THE DATE!

Hopefully you've heard our campaign to raise the minimum wage in Renton, keep families housed, and stay competitive with neighboring cities IS ON THE BALLOT! **If you're a Renton voter turn in your ballot by February 13th.**

Even if you're NOT a Renton voter, **you're invited** to a fundraising
PARTY the evening of January 5th IN RENTON!

More details coming soon, but mark your calendar now for a **CELEBRATION** of our achievement and fun as we embark on the Get Out the Vote phase.

As we engage with voters, we need to print literature and pay for our website costs.

Help us by joining us for live entertainment, food, drink, art build materials, a silent auction and more!



**We're fighting to ensure
Working Families can afford
to live in Renton.**

AND....it's not too late to sign up for tomorrow's Renton-specific training!

WASHINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
PRESENTS:

NEW DISCIPLINE RULES

Moving Away from
Exclusionary Practice

**COURSE TITLE: CLASSROOM & SCHOOL
PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE EQUITABLE
STUDENT DISCIPLINE SYSTEMS**

2 clock hours

**DECEMBER
19 TUESDAY**

**4:30PM–
6:30PM**

**ZOOM LINK PROVIDED
UPON REGISTRATION**



May your break be exactly what you need and want, you deserve it!