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Washington Education Association
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Washington
47th in
Class
Size!

Together, we will make the difference.

We know as educators and union members we are best when we join together. Recently, I had the opportunity to tour many of Washington's 27 "high priority" schools to honor and recognize their achievements that resulted from successful collaboration.

Three years ago, these 27 high-poverty schools were labeled as failing, a dubious distinction that qualified them as eligible for a federal school improvement grant (SIG) that brought additional money and resources to these schools. Across the country, about 1,400 schools received these federal funds, but here in Washington, the students in our SIG schools achieved the greatest gains. Why?

Union educators worked with parents, administration and in some cases the community to develop improvement plans specific to the students' needs in each school. No two plans were the same. There was not one top down prescriptive cure, but 27 plans that were designed and implemented to address what was happening in each school. The takeaway is what the writers of our state constitution envisioned: an amply funded public education that allows

our students to succeed. Along with Vice President Stephen Miller, it has been an honor to meet with many of the teachers, ESPs, counselors and other educators who led these efforts. Witnessing the pride of the staff and students about how far they have come, and what they have achieved has been inspiring and rewarding.

If you want to learn more about how these schools did it, visit our website at www.WashingtonEA.org.

Our SIG schools provide examples we can learn from to address other challenges ahead, in particular, how we implement the coming Common Core State Standards. We know that many educators support the Common Core because of its promise to provide every student the opportunity for a richer and deeper education. We also have some real concerns.

How the Common Core is implemented will be critical to its success. It seems that much of the world is focused on the assessments, and not building in the proper supports to ensure that our students can meet the new standards.

I believe that a thoughtful approach — one that makes the right steps in the right order — is essential if our students are to achieve the promise of the Common Core. We have the standards. They are high and challenge all of us — educators, principals, parents, school boards and the Legislature — to ensure our students reach them. That means aligning the curriculum to the standards. Training staff about the standards and curriculum. Engaging parents about the Common Core and providing the time to do this right. Then, and only then, should we be running assessments to measure student growth.

NEA recently conducted a survey about Common Core. Teachers from across the country said smaller class sizes are what students most need to be successful in meeting the new standards. We know that's true here in Washington state, where we are 47th out of 50 states for class sizes.

Hopefully by now you have seen or heard about our efforts to reduce class sizes and have joined the Class Size Counts effort. It is a legislative priority for us, as is restoring the COLA, and you can read more about both these issues in this edition.

Our students deserve better if we as a society truly want them to achieve their potential. You, our members, deserve the respect and pay that matches your dedication and allows you to earn a living with one job that simply pays you to educate our youth. Too many of our classroom teachers and college professors work more than one job — and many of our education support professionals don't even make a living wage. The future of our students is dependent on having dedicated professionals be able to continue providing the excellent education they deserve.

Reach out to our parent and community members. Share the stories of your classroom and workplace. They will want to support you. Thank you for the great work you do every day. Together, we will make the difference.



Kim Mead
WEA President

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A South Kitsap EA member shares her class size. What's your number?

Class Size Counts for all students



As educators, we know smaller class sizes are better because they allow us to spend more time with each student.

Parents know the benefit of smaller class sizes, too. "Class sizes over 20, especially for younger children, are not fair to the kids or the teachers," said JoAnna B., an Edmonds parent.

Unfortunately, in many Washington school districts, students are packed into overcrowded classrooms, making it much harder for adults to provide the personal attention our students deserve.

Overall, Washington's class sizes rank 47th out of 50 states — only three states have larger class sizes.

WEA members, parents and community leaders are working to change that statistic. More than 3,000 educators and parents have shared their class size numbers with Class Size Counts, a new community group campaigning to reduce class sizes in Washington's public schools.

If you haven't already, you can go to www.ClassSizeCountsWA.com and submit your class size.

Class Size Counts is collecting class size numbers and stories to raise public awareness before the Legislature starts in January. Whether it's high or low, and whether you're a certificated educator or an education support professional, and especially if you are the parent of a student in public school, submit your class size now.

"When we talk about class size, we also mean caseloads for education staff associates and the important work education support professionals do with students," WEA President Kim Mead says. "Share your story and help reduce class sizes for students in all grades and subjects."

Reducing overcrowded class sizes is one of WEA's top legislative priorities for 2014, along with reinstating educator cost-of-living adjustments. (Read about WEA's legislative agenda on page 6.)

Class Size Counts!



Susan Yaw
first-grade teacher
Pioneer Elementary School
Quincy

“Class size is important because kids today have many challenges in their home life. In our area, we have second language learners so they're trying to learn the language and trying to learn the content all in one. They don't necessarily have the help at home and it's important to connect so we can help families understand what they can do even if they don't know English.”

“I teach a special education resource room type program. I have 31 students (soon to be 32) in kindergarten to sixth grade for whom I provide special education. Based on their needs and IEPs, we have 24 instructional groups.”



Connie Compton
special education teacher
Jenkins Creek Elementary
Kent



Common Core. Common Sense.

Aligning curriculum, providing training are critical steps

Common Core. Two words charged with uncertainty and anxiety for some, but certainly not all. When Sequim Education Association high school math teacher Brian Berg and his colleagues took a first stab at aligning what they teach to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), he was intrigued. He says their work on it was a very rough draft, yet he is cautiously optimistic about the possibilities with Common Core.

“We are excited about the opportunity that the Common Core will give us to dive more deeply into mathematics that will more fully engage students,” Berg says. “Topics that were a lesson or two in our current curriculum will become a two- to three-week unit, with time for activities, and not just drill and practice.”

The National Education Association’s position says: NEA believes the CCSS have the potential to provide access to a complete and challenging education for all children. Broad range cooperation in developing these standards provides educators with more manageable curriculum goals and greater opportunities to use their professional judgment in ways that promote student success.

“There’s a lot of confusion about the Common Core standards,” NEA President Dennis Van Roekel says. “The standards are meant to bring all states onto an equal footing when it comes to preparing students for college.”

An NEA poll of 1,200 NEA members reveals 26 percent are wholeheartedly in favor of the standards while another 50 percent support them with some reservation. And 79 percent of those surveyed say they are at least somewhat prepared to implement the new standards. So, what is at the root of the Common Core controversy? Assessment.

While NEA is staunchly supporting Common Core, it is also pointing out consistently that educators must have the time, tools and resources to make a smooth transition. More than 80 percent of those surveyed by NEA believe CCSS should be implemented with a two- to five-year grace period on assessment.

Educators say they favor CCSS because the goals are clear. Like Sequim’s Brian Berg, educators say they believe the more rigorous standards will allow them to dig deeper with students for a stronger and better understanding of their subject.

The thorny issue of too much testing and high-stakes assessments worry many in the education community. The pressure to tie student scores to teacher evaluations just as CCSS are being implemented is inappropriate. They say they need collaboration time, more planning time, updated resources and better technology to be able to administer the computer-based tests. Forty-three percent of those who were surveyed said that smaller class sizes would allow students the opportunity to learn the new standards.



The Clinton administration pushes a group of laws which require states to set standards and set up corresponding tests.



No Child Left Behind passes in 2001. The act requires states to test students in specific grades and subjects. States are free to set their own standards and create their own tests. (In Washington, students were taking the WASL, which was not developed to test individual students but ended up being used as our state standard).



1983

1994

1996

2001

2008



Thirty years ago, the Reagan Administration publishes “A Nation at Risk.” The report calls for setting national standards and marks the beginning of “standards-based education reform.”

In 1996, non-profit group called Achieve is founded with the purpose of working together to raise standards and achievement in public schools. The group, made up of governors and business leaders, becomes instrumental in the “education reform” movement.

Seven years later, the National Governors Association, state education commissioners and others began developing common national standards in math and language arts for grades K-12.

Zillah High School science teacher and 2013 National Teacher of the Year Jeff Charbonneau is a staunch supporter of CCSS. “I think the one thing to remember about Common Core is that Common Core is about a standard. It’s about where we want students to be at the end of a year or at the end of the class. It’s not about how to get there; it’s about where they need to be.”

Your Association has already geared up to help members. Last summer WEA provided professional development through the CCSS Jump Start and Special Education Boot Camps. UniServ representatives are identifying CCSS implementation and assessment bargaining issues. WEA plans on carefully tracking federal and state CCSS developments and policies. Additionally, the state Superintendent’s Office is providing support through raising awareness, communicating with parents, providing messages and support for special populations. OSPI has a CCSS educator cadre and toolkits to help educators make the transition. Our state is part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

This school year, we will begin SBAC voluntary field testing in 15-20 percent of schools. (OSPI received a waiver, so those schools are exempt from MSP assessments). Participating high school students will still need to take the 10th-grade HSPE for graduation purposes and the 11th-grade SBAC math and language arts assessments.

As states move from piloting the test to measuring how students are faring, scores in Kentucky and New York showed a significant drop. Some states are facing criticism from both the right and left sides of the political aisle. The Tea Party is fighting hard to stop CCSS from

moving forward while some parents are pulling their kids out of standardized testing altogether. There are many other valid issues including a narrowing of curriculum, less fiction in the curriculum, no genuine accountability in the test questions, erroneous or inappropriate test questions, and outdated textbooks. Those issues must be taken into account, but ought not to stop us from moving forward, says WEA President Kim Mead.

“Change is messy,” Mead says. “While we believe standardized tests need to be put back in their proper place, we need to work together to move forward

for the sake of our students. Common Core will allow us to clearly teach to standards while allowing us the individual freedom to make sure our students are learning what they need to know to compete in today’s job market. High-stakes testing is a whole different issue.”

“I think the one thing to remember about Common Core is that Common Core is about a standard. It’s about where we want students to be at the end of a year or at the end of the class. It’s not about how to get there; it’s about where they need to be.”

– Jeff Charbonneau
Zillah High teacher

2013 National Teacher of the Year

For more information and developments about Common Core State Standards, visit www.nea.org/commoncore and www.k12.wa.us/CoreStandards

By 2009, every state except for Texas and Alaska join in developing Common Core standards.

A year later, Kentucky adopts the standards before they’ve been released publicly. They are released in March to the public for “comment.”

In November 2011, Montana is the final state to adopt CCSS. Alaska, Nebraska, Texas and Virginia opt out. Minnesota adopts math but not English/Language arts.

Last school year, the two groups begin pilot testing of the new tests. Washington is part of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

By 2014-2015, all participating states are supposed to begin using new standardized tests for math and English language arts. They are supposed to replace tests that states currently use.

2009

2010

2011



2012

2013

2014/15

In June 2010, final CCSS are released for states to adopt or reject.

California adopts Common Core the day federal officials set as the deadline for states to apply for federal funds via Race to the Top. If a state adopted CCSS, they received more points and were more likely to receive federal grants.

Design of the new standardized tests which are tied to Common Core begin being developed in 2011-2012 by two groups which share \$360 million in federal grants.

Field testing across the country continues this school year.

COLA, class size top WEA's legislative goals for 2014



It's not about falling behind ... it's about fairness. Washington's class sizes are among the nation's worst. We're 47th now... and will remain 47th in the nation, and that is not what "paramount duty" means. We can't afford not to lower class sizes for all students – both morally and financially. Meanwhile, our educators' salaries aren't keeping pace with inflation or Washington's average wages. Last April WEA RA delegates raised public awareness and demanded lawmakers take action on both issues in Olympia. Stay informed and stay engaged.

After five years with no state-funded salary increase, and with Washington class sizes ranked 47th out of 50, it's time for the state Legislature to step up and fully fund our public schools.

All Washington students deserve a quality public education. That means having the best teachers and support professionals in our public schools — and reasonable class sizes and caseloads.

Earlier this month, the WEA Board of Directors adopted the 2014 legislative agenda. Compensation and class size are at the top, along with empowering educators to improve our profession.

Educators sacrificed during the Great Recession. But after five years — going on six years — without a state cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), it's a simple matter of fairness. Forcing public school employees to go six years without a raise is unfair to them and their students.

Compensation gains negotiated through local bargaining have helped, yet increased health care costs, the lost COLA and a reduction in state-funded work days mean many educators are taking home less money than they did in years past.

Meanwhile, Washington's class sizes are 47th out of 50 states. That's unacceptable.

The Washington Legislature convenes Jan. 13, 2014, and legislative caucuses begin meeting in November to shape their own agendas for the upcoming session.

The next few months are a crucial opportunity for WEA members to influence what happens in January. After years of inadequate funding, overcrowded class sizes and stagnant educator pay, legislators have an obligation to increase school funding, reduce class sizes and restore the educator COLA.

Some legislators, particularly in the House Democratic caucus, understand and support the

Summary of WEA's 2014 Legislative Goals

- Restore the COLA and fully fund education, including K-12 and higher education.
- Reduce class sizes and caseloads and increase support staff.
- Trust and empower educators to improve schools and their profession, including evaluations.

Visit www.OurVoiceWashingtonEA.org for WEA's complete legislative goals and information about all three issues.

need to make these investments. Other lawmakers are expected to push more misguided and ill-conceived legislation like tying teacher evaluations directly to student test scores — an agenda that has nothing to do with reducing class sizes or improving educator pay.

School employees and voters know the real issue is the lack of adequate funding and support from the state. It's time to have that conversation with our elected officials, and it's time for them to know we expect — and demand — that they listen to educators, fund our schools and do the right thing for our students.

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Bellingham's Katie Brown is the 2014 Washington Teacher of the Year

Katie Brown says personal connection drives excellence.

"I want to be better because I want my students to be better," says Brown, an English Language Learner specialist at Shuksan Middle School in Bellingham and the newly minted state Teacher of the Year.

Brown, who has taught for 11 years, was one of nine regional finalists considered for the award. The announcement was made at a Sept. 23 ceremony at the Experience Music Project in Seattle.

"This type of award is basically an award for Shuksan, for everyone at the school," Brown says.

In her application, Brown says her message as ambassador for schools this year will be to usher in an "era of teamwork" where teaching behind closed doors is no more.

"When teachers feel they are part of a supportive team, and are given time to collaborate, they are more willing to try new things," she wrote.

"Collaboration creates a safe environment conducive to self-reflection, motivation and accountability."

Brown transitioned into her role as ELL specialist two years ago, after teaching social studies and language arts. As an ELL specialist she has helped contribute to the success of teachers, students and their families by helping staff implement the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol. It helps ELL students continue in their different classes while working on language skills. She also coaches teachers, facilitates professional development, and works on involving families.

Under Brown's direction, the number of ELL students passing the state's Measurements of Student Progress at Shuksan went up by 20 percent in just one year, and the number passing the Washington English Language Proficiency test continues to rise.

Last year Brown helped start a series of ELL Family Nights, where she meets with families that

speak many different languages, giving them the chance to ask questions about school curriculum and stay informed about their child's education. At the first meeting in 2011, 10 families attended. By the last meeting in March 2013, attendance brought 38 families with six different languages represented.

Her students said their teacher's work and influence has boosted their confidence about school in general.

"Every day I go to her classroom for help explaining the things I am learning in other classes," student Jose Mejia said in his recommendation letter of Brown. "This year I wrote a graphic novel and she helped me understand how to create a story in my head. ... Mrs. Brown motivates us to achieve our goals in school and in life. She does not tell me I can't do it. She always tells me not to give up."

Brown is the second teacher from Whatcom County to win Teacher of the Year in recent years. Bellingham High's Jamie Yoos took the title in 2010.

Watch a video of 2014 Washington Teacher of the Year Katie Brown in action at www.WashingtonEA.org/TOY



Congratulations to the 2014 regional winners ...

Jeffrey Dunn
Educational Service District 101
Deer Park School District
Deer Park High School

Joshua Schlegel
Educational Service District 105
Sunnyside School District
Harrison Middle School

Sheila Stuhlsatz
Educational Service District 112
Kalama School District
Kalama Middle and High School

Laura Currie
Educational Service District 113
Olympia School District
Centennial Elementary School

Eric Samson
Educational Service District 114
Central Kitsap School District
Central Kitsap Junior High School

Amy Abrams
Puget Sound Educational Service District 121
Kent School District
Northwood Middle School

Bernice Hanan
Educational Service District 123
Pasco School District
Chiawana High School

Matthew Brewer
North Central Educational Service District 171
Soap Lake School District
Soap Lake High School

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**CLASS
SIZE
COUNTS**

October is CLASS SIZE COUNTS month.

Visit www.ClassSizeCountsWA.com and submit your class size.

“As a special education teacher, class size is vitally important. Recently, I’ve had 18 special education students in one class and they range from first-grade level to eighth-grade level and **there’s no way you can serve them all – it’s just impossible.** Everybody has individual needs. Everyone needs help and you just can’t get to everyone and they don’t get the instruction they need from the teacher.”

*Natalie Loy
special education teacher
Desert Hills Middle School
Kennewick*



*Becky Fuentes
fifth-grade teacher
Highland Elementary
Lake Stevens*

“Class size is so important! I also tutor kids where the ratio is two students to one teacher. I see these kids progress faster and also receive specifically tailored education to meet their needs. When I have a small group of students in my class of 30, each group has about 6-7 kids. Even the small groups aren’t small. It has become increasingly difficult to meet the social, emotional and academic needs of so many students. Our kids deserve better! To meet their needs, class sizes need to be decreased so students can receive individualized attention and lessons!”

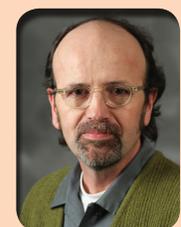
“ I teach second graders and in order to reach all of their needs, it is really important to have the lowest class size possible. When you have 25 students, with various needs and at least half the class speaking a language other than English, children with IEPs, it is difficult. ”



*Cindy Pang-Ching
second-grade teacher
Tiffany Park Elementary
Renton*

“I know from a stint in an Alaska bush village where I had just 13 students I was able to not only differentiate, but could act as an interventionist and tutor students one on one. As a teacher in Washington state I can have double that number, and am near it now. **My differentiation is far less individualized or effective**, and I struggle to meet the needs of all of my students in the tiny amount of time I have to conference with them.”

*Rebecca Hansen
third-grade teacher
Salvage Elementary School
Cheney*



“Class size is really important because I think **schooling is more than just books and testing. It’s also building relationships** and with a child, you have to build a relationship before you get to the education part.”

*Robert Reynolds
fourth-grade teacher
Silverdale Elementary
Silverdale*