



Washoe Education Association Newsletter

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- October 4-8th**
Fall Break
- October 13th**
Building Rep Council
- October 15th**
End of Grading Period
- October 21st and November 4th**
(4:15pm)
Pre-Retirement Programs (Virtual)
- October 29th**
Nevada Day Observed
- November 3rd**
Building Rep Council
- November 11th**
Veteran's Day
- November 24th-28th**
Thanksgiving Break
- December 16th**
End of Grading Period
- December 17th**
Teacher Work Day
- December 20th-31st**
Winter Break

WEA Is Here For You

Phil Kaiser/ WEA President

We thought it would be over. We thought it would be better. We thought it would be back to normal. It ain't. COVID continues and the effort to reach and teach students through exclusions has created huge burdens for educators. The continued conflicts about masks are a common irritation for many, and there is fatigue both literally and figuratively.

We hear you, and we are here for you. Literally every day we represent members who need help. This includes Sick Leave Bank requests, air quality issues, conflicts and concerns with principals, and trying to ensure a safe school environment for students and educators.

We have members on the insurance committee, the zoning committee, the supplemental materials task force, and the contract bargaining team. Recently our WEA board has met with Superintendent Kristen McNeill and separately with the two newest school board members Joe Rodriguez and Beth Smith. Much of this work is behind the scenes but it is ongoing and our voice is heard.

Meaningful professional development is being offered through our PD Committee (see Andrea DeMichieli's article), and our engagement with the Education Alliance helps provide needed physical education resources to our elementary schools. And don't forget the Partners In Education warehouse that has a variety of school supplies.

There is also the Employee Assistance Program that provides confidential counseling services for you and your immediate family including marriage/ family counseling, substance abuse, etc. (There are two ways to access your GuidanceResources benefits: 1. Call 855.401.WCSD (9273). You'll speak to a counseling professional who will listen to your concerns and can guide you to the appropriate services you require; or 2. Visit GuidanceResources Online at www.guidanceresources.com and enter your company ID: WCSDEAP).

Please realize that most parents, students, and community members value educators. Don't let the critics get you down. In the words of Bill Withers in his song "Lean on Me,"

*You just call on me brother when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'll understand
We all need somebody to lean on*



The WEA Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WashoeEducationAssociation) is the best place to find up to date information on the WEA. Like and Follow us to stay informed about issues that impact you.

Negotiations Update

Summer Kay/ WEA Executive Director

WEA's negotiations team has been working with the District in holding five bargaining sessions since June 2021, focused on fair compensation for highly trained

educators, improved working conditions, and maintaining sensible workload expectations. We have engaged in a number of meaningful discussions toward meeting our goals. Several Tentative Agreements (TAs) have been signed for

inclusion in the new contract. The District's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) will be presented at the November 9 school board meeting, after which we will finalize a financial package to propose to the District.

Getting it Straight: COVID-19 and HIPAA

Frank Flaherty/ Dyer Lawrence Law Firm

"HIPAA" is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. HIPAA Rules generally do not apply to employers or employment records. HIPAA only applies to covered entities, such as health care providers, health plans, and health care clearinghouses – and, to some extent, to their business associates, which are organizations that covered entities engage to help them carry out their health care activities and functions. See 45 CFR 160.103 (definitions of covered entities and business associates). Thus, if an employer asks an employee about the results of the employee's COVID-19 test or the employee's COVID-19 vaccination status or asks an employee to

provide proof of vaccination, there is no HIPAA violation because HIPAA is simply not applicable.

Questions from an employer to an employee about COVID-19 test results or vaccination status are "medical inquiries," and the controlling statutes for such inquiries are the **Family and Medical Leave Act** ("FMLA"), which permits employer medical inquiries necessary to determine whether an employee's absence qualifies as a serious health condition that triggers FMLA leave provisions, and the **Americans with Disabilities Act** ("ADA"). The statute at play in the context of COVID-19 testing and vaccination questions is the ADA, which permits an employer to make medical inquiries

that are "job related and consistent with business necessity." See 29 CFR 1630.14(c). Recent guidance issued by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC"), which is charged with interpreting and enforcing the ADA, has confirmed that employers may require COVID-19 testing, may ask whether an employee has been vaccinated and may require an employee to provide proof of vaccination. But note that if an employee responds to an employer's question and states that the employee has not received the COVID-19 vaccine, an employer generally is not permitted to ask why not.

Bell Schedule Survey

The WCSD Board is considering a change to the bell schedules for the 2022-23 or 2023-24 school year and wants your input. The reason for the change is that the Board has reviewed research that later start times could have benefits for middle and high school students, including a decrease in tardies and absences, a decrease in teen driving accidents, etc. All of the proposed changes will have middle and high schools starting no earlier than 8:00 am. There are cost differences among the proposals, primarily because some proposals require more buses and drivers than others.

The survey asks for your input on six proposed bell schedule changes. It is anonymous and will be available until October 11. The link for more information and to take the survey is: www.washoeschools.net/bellschedule.

Fake COVID-19 Vaccination Cards: Not Worth the Risk!

Frank Flaherty/ Dyer Lawrence Law Firm

Yes, it is a crime—a felony—to fraudulently or wrongfully affix or impress the seal of any department or agency of the United States, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), to any document or paper or to use any such document or paper. 18 USC § 1017. A COVID-19

Vaccination Record Card is affixed with the seal of the CDC. A violation of 18 USC § 1017 is punishable by up to five years in a prison, a fine of up to \$250,000 or both. 18 USC § 1017; 18 USC § 3571(b).

Aside from and in addition to exposure to criminal prosecution, use of a fraudulent COVID-19 Vaccination

Record Card is grounds for discipline by a school district, up to and including dismissal from employment. The grounds for such discipline include conviction of a felony or crime involving moral turpitude, dishonesty, gross misconduct, unprofessional conduct and neglect of duty.

Spotlight on Extraordinary Educators

Two members of WEA were finalists for the PBS Reno Extraordinary Educator award this year: Kimberly Smerkers-Bass and Milt Hyams. The PBS Spotlight Awards was broadcast September 18, 2021, and WEA President Phil Kaiser announced the candidates and introduced their video profiles. Considering the difficult year-and-a-half we have faced, it is welcome to have some positive recognition for the efforts of educators. Below are edited versions of the biographies provided for PBS.

Dr. Kimberly Smerkers-Bass began her educational career as a special education teacher in 1990 at Sparks High School and later Sarah Winnemucca Elementary School. She has a master’s degree in Educational Leadership and a Doctorate of Education with a focus on Organizational Leadership from the University of La Verne. Throughout her career, she has been a program facilitator for WCSD’s Special Education Department; helping teachers develop specialized instruction for their classrooms.

Among other things, she was also the principal of Sun Valley Elementary School and Lloyd Diedrichsen Elementary, and worked for the Nevada Department of Education, the nonprofit WestEd and the Nevada Speech-Language-Hearing Association. In 2018, she returned to the classroom to teach Comprehensive Life Skills at Roy Gomm Elementary, the same school where she did her student teaching almost thirty years prior. Wearing many hats during her career, returning to the classroom has been the most rewarding experience of her career, reigniting her passion and commitment towards her students and community.

Milton Hyams is a National Board Certified and award-winning high school social studies teacher. He holds a bachelor’s degree in History from UC Davis, and a master’s in Teaching History from the University of Nevada, Reno. Milton has taught in WCSD for 24 years at both Reed and Incline High School. He is currently the

Department Leader at Incline High School, where he helped start the Advanced Placement Capstone Program. Milton teaches AP humanities classes, particularly AP Government/We the People: Citizen and the Constitution. We the People is an internationally recognized civics curriculum that develops students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for citizenship in a representative democracy. Milton has taught this program competitively for 24 years. Leading 16 teams to the national finals, his team has won the Western Regional Award five times and placed eighth in the United States at the 2021 National Finals. PBS Reno featured one of his classes on A Conversation: We the People. He has also received the American Civic Education Teacher Award, the Nevada Humanities Outstanding Teaching of the Humanities Award, and was the winner of the 2021 PBS Extraordinary Educator Award.

Let's Party!

Nicolette Andrini/ WEA Awards Committee Chair

Each year in May, the WEA celebrates our best educators and upcoming retirees with a wonderful dinner banquet and awards ceremony. This year our banquet will be on Friday, May 6, 2022 at the Grand Sierra Resort. We are looking to grow our Awards Committee, as we plan on throwing an

amazing party this year! This is a fun, feel-good committee where we plan the whole event, from start to finish, including: theme, menu, gifts, etc. We also write the program booklet acknowledging our award winners and highlighting their achievements. We will start with a planning meeting in No-

vember, and create a time-line and calendar of future meetings for our committee. On the actual day of the event, WEA will sub you out, and we spend the day decorating and preparing for the festivities! If you're interested in joining the Awards Committee, please email Nicolette Andrini (NAndrini@washoeschools.net).

WEA Professional Development

Andrea DeMichieli/ WEA Treasurer and PD Committee Chair

WEA is working to broaden its professional development opportunities this year. We want our members to be able to earn not only their recertification hours, but also in-service credits through WCSD that can be used for salary advancement. As a reminder, pursuant to NAC 391.065, the renewal requirement for educator licenses requires 15 hours each calendar year of professional development or the equivalent of in-service training. For more detailed information, visit the Nevada Department of Education at https://doe.nv.gov/Educator_Licensure/Licensure_Renewals/.

This year we are excited to announce professional development programs in collaboration with the Nevada State Education Association and the National Education Association. All of these initiatives are free to members.

Blended Learning: NEA's blended learning courses combine both traditional face-to-face meetings

with the greater efficiencies and flexibility of online learning tools. These blended learning courses are designed to enhance collaborative professional learning. Currently, members are completing a classroom management course, which is going well, and WEA looks forward to expanding our Blended Learning catalog this school year. For more information about Blended Learning, email Amy Benham-Bookey at abenham@washoeschools.net.

Micro-Credentials: A micro-credential is a competency-based recognition that allows an educator to demonstrate mastery in a particular area. NEA's micro-credentials are grounded in research and best practice; they are personalized, flexible, and performance-based. As of Fall 2021, NEA offers more than 175 micro-credentials in a variety of educational topics. For more information about Micro-Credentials, email Andrea De Michieli at ademichieli@washoeschools.net.

Early Leadership Institute (ELI): WEA will be starting its fourth ELI cohort in January. This program is designed for early educators who want to strengthen their professional connections across the association, develop new skills, and formalize an action pathway toward association leadership. It is a six-month program with monthly meetings that culminate with the creation of a Leadership Engagement & Action Project. For more information about ELI, email Andrea De Michieli at ademichieli@washoeschools.net

Teacher Pathway Leadership Institute (T-PATH): WEA will be starting its first T-PATH cohort in January. This program is designed for mid-career educators who are interested in teacher leadership with a focus on policy issues and systemic change. It is a 20-week program with seven virtual sessions that culminates with a group capstone project. For more information about T-PATH, email Dawn Etcheverry at DEMiller@washoeschools.net.

Welcome, New Members!

Julia Antonucci

Billingshurst

Veronica Aquirre-Vides

Turning Point

Mary Argueta

Gomm

Jennifer Bigelow

Smithridge

Kenneth Bleak

Spanish Springs HS

Denise Borgia

Depoali

Marci Brodock

Natchez

Johnna Campbell

Cold Springs

Gretchen Canepa

Hidden Valley

Elyza Nikole Capacia

Lemelson

John Caparoni

Vaughn

Kaylee Carlson

Mitchell

Kimberly Chavez-Najera

Beck

Aubrie Ciesynski

Booth

Audrey Clark

Hug

Kelly Cochran

Bohach

Alyssa Conner

McQueen

Darcie Crandall

Desert Skies

Bianca Crespo Molina

Silver Lake

Toukine Deakin

Alice Smith

Colline Debray

O'Brien

Victor Dejong

Wooster

Jennifer Dobson

McQueen

McKenna Dorman

Cold Springs

Alexander Drudi

Reed

Kathleen Erlendson

Corbett

Katrina Felhauer

Desert Skies

Jessica Flynn

Reed

Madison Freitas

Traner

Katie Gaeckle

Sun Valley

Robin Galehzan

Donner Springs

Tara Ginty

Herz

Delaney Gosse

Mitchell

Jordan Gotchy

Sky Ranch

Gabriel Greenspan

Vaughn

Christina Griffith

Sky Ranch

Gina Gustovson

Van Gorder

Christin Hair-O'Keefe

Edison

Amanda Harding

Stead

Tiana Herrera

Lemelson

Jacob Herringshaw

Cold Springs

Serena Herup

Cannan

Sara Hescher

Smithridge

Thor Heydman

Inspire

Renee Honold

Mendive

Courtney Hudson

Smithridge

Lisa Jones

Mitchell

Courtney Kelly

Reno

Cyndie Kim

Damonte Ranch

Vardan Kirakosyan

Reed

Emily Koester

Wooster

Mackenzie Kohler

Swope

Brittany Lang

Swope

Gabriela Larios

Anderson

Ashleigh Loendorf

Lemmon Valley

Linda Longfellow

Mendive

Kaylee Lunday

O'Brien

Anita Lyons

Palmer

George Magula

Reed

Olivia Mahony

Greenbrae

Britnie Marquez

Damonte Ranch

Jonathan Marshall

Sparks MS

Tiffany Marty

Sepulveda

Thomas Maurer

O'Brien

Timothy McCartin

Damonte Ranch

Madison McGahn

Lemmon Valley

Heather McLaughlin

North Star

Mary Menicucci

Allen

Chyna Metz-Bannister

Sparks HS

Cassandra Mills

Cold Springs

Amber Mitchell

Natchez

Mariah Moore

Shaw

Catherine Morgan

Beasley

Connor Morgan

Caughlin Ranch

Olivia Moses

Anderson

Welcome, New Members!

Jennifer Murillo-Alvarado

Juniper

Brian Nelson

Spanish Springs HS

Mark Nelson

Wooster

Stephan Nguyen

North Valleys

Christopher Nicholson

Picollo

Madi Noble

Desert Skies

Kate Norcross

North Star

Derek Novsek

Reno

Angela O'Laughlin

O'Brien

Sheila Ono

Donner Springs

Nati Ordas

Smithridge

Kate Palani

Reno

Erik Paulson

North Valleys

Alexandra Pereyra

Clayton

Kiersten Piekarz

Innovations

Haley Pinkston

Herz

Heather Power

Smithridge

Olga Quiroz

Sun Valley

Katherine Ramin

McQueen

Cindi Randall

Swope

Angelica Reams-Stockton

Reno

Timothy Robinson

Mendive

Maribel Rojas Mendoza

Duncan

Angela Roller

Gomm

Jennifer Russell

Gomm

Amanda Ryan

Winnemucca

Katherine Scadden

Shaw

Michelle Scaduto

Reed

Mary Schiff

Hug

Jessica Schmidt-Petersen

Cold Springs

Lori Schoen

Towles

Megan Schwarzrock

Maxwell

Mabel Sedano

Allen

James Sharkey

North Star

Kourtney Sidener

Inskeep

Samantha Sidman

Sun Valley

Ryan Sims

Reed

Madison Smith

Desert Heights

Angelica Solano

Hug

Heather Stodieck Reid

Depoali

Reanna Stroup

Intinerant

Maria Tapia-Ramirez

Desert Heights

Heidi Thompson

TOSA

Kristina Totten

O'Brien

Lauren Tucker

Dilworth

Roxanne Tuggle

Dodson

Kayla Tuso

Sun Valley

Emily Valencia

Palmer

Kaitlyn Van Kirk

North Valleys

Anna Vargas

McQueen

Willie Vasquez

Wooster

Sarah Verbeek

Melton

Jerilynn Victorian

Allen

Sandra Vieyra

Hug

Kimberly Vogler

Cold Springs

Katelyn Watson

North Valleys

December Watts

Lincoln Park

Jennifer Wilhelm

Damonte Ranch

Adam Wilkinson

Sparks HS

Michelle Wright

Lincoln Park

Samantha Yenger Cremean

Reno



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WEA Today is published three times per year to inform, educate and entertain the members of Washoe Education Association. We urge readers to write letters to the editor on matters of concern. Letters should be mailed to WEA Today Editor at 1890 Donald Street, Reno, NV, 89502. All letters must be signed and include phone number; however, anonymity will be granted if deemed necessary. We reserve the right to edit for length or libelous comments. It would be appreciated if letters were typed, but neatly handwritten copies are accepted.