

FEAtures

Newsletter of the Ferndale Education Association •

April 6, 2007

Tracie Morris *President - Skyline*
Candy Ford *Vice-President - Eagleridge*
Lynn Kelling *Secretary - Custer*
Cheryl Frazier *Treasurer - Skyline*
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Denise Smith *Head Rep - Central*
Joelle Schneider *- Central*

Lynn Kelling *Head Rep - Custer*
Brandi Caffrey *- Custer*
Ryan Mitchell *- Custer*

Candy Ford *Head Rep - Eagleridge*
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Vicki Salisbury *- Eagleridge*
Jamie O'Brien *- Eagleridge*
Tami O'Neill *- Eagleridge*

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Lindsay Dorr *- Mt. View*
Jan Polen *- Mt. View*
Cathy Cook *Minority Rep - Mt. View*

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Christi Liese *- N. Bell*

Greg Hart *Head Rep - Skyline*

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Drew Sampson *- F.H.S.*
Heidi Stahlberg *- F.H.S.*
Mike Smith *- F.H.S.*
Susan Smith *- F.H.S.*
Cherie Thomas *- F.H.S.*

Adam Goldstein *Head Rep - W.H.S.*

WEA Children's Fund

"Do you know students whose families can't afford a warm coat, a new pair of boots (shoes), or basic school supplies?" The WEA Children's Fund can help! The goal of the WEA Children's Fund is to help meet the modest and immediate needs of students you spend time with each day. The intent is to ensure that the physical, social, and emotional needs of students do not stand in the way of success within the school setting.

How do you access the fund? By quickly typing in a request, any WEA member can get pre-approval (usually within two days by email) to spend up to \$100 to benefit a student. After purchasing an item, mail or fax the receipt to the Children's Fund and you'll be reimbursed. So the steps are:

1. Identify the student.
2. Identify what you want to purchase.
3. Go to WEA website, follow the directions and type in your request.
4. Call 1-800-622-3393 ext. 7033 with questions.
5. You will get a "quick and easy OK".
6. Fax a copy of the receipt to 1-253-946-7232, or mail to WEA Children's Fund, PO Box 9100, Federal Way, WA 98063.

There are some items that are not allowed by this program. They include:

- Gift cards
- Food
- Extra-curricular items
- Medical appointments or items
- Prom dresses
- Purchases made at Wal-Mart

If you would like to view testimonials about the Children's Fund, go to the WEA website.

The WEA Children's Fund is registered as a not-for-profit 501 (3) organization, and so any individual or corporate donations to the Fund are tax deductible. See the website for more information on this.

Important Facts You Should Know:

- Washington spends 10.5% less on K-12 education than the national average.
- Washington has now moved from 46th to 47th in the nation in class size.
- We're dead last in compensation among the west coast states.
- Washington ranks 42nd in the nation in per-pupil spending.
- Washington spends \$548 less per student than it did in 1992.

What's In Your File?

by Jenny Kubic

Yesterday I took a trip down memory lane. I asked to see my building file. Until recently, I was only vaguely aware that there was a file just for me in my building, and I hadn't much of an idea what was in that file. I asked our building secretary if I could see my file. The answer was, "Of course!" I just needed to stay in the office while I looked at it. I spent the next 20 minutes perusing evaluations and letters that dated back to 1990, the year of my internship, and also the year I was assistant coach for the high school's gymnastics team. Yes, we had one back then!

All teachers can look at what is in their files, and I recommend that you do so in the near future. At the high school it is best to request this during our prep time, and avoid the times just before school and just after school as the office is extremely busy.

I have learned the following: There are two files for each of us. One at your building, and one in the district office. The building file is kept by administrators and is not open to the public. The district file is open to the public. There shouldn't be anything in either file that you don't know about, and there certainly shouldn't be anything negative, like a letter of warning or reprimand, in your file that you don't know

about. You can ask to have things removed, but at this time we do not have language in our contract that gives a limit on how long something can be in there. FEA officers and negotiators are aware of this issue, as is our Uniserve Representative and the district office.

Here's why knowing what is in your file can be important: Our district uses a progressive discipline policy. This means that things add up. You need to know where you are in these steps. Coaches especially need to be aware of what is in their files, as these have been included in the progressive steps, and this brings up some important questions about rights and due process.

So take some time and become informed. Visit your secretary and ask to see your file and read it thoroughly. Ask questions. Then visit the district office and look through your file there. You need to be educated and prepared.

Since you are checking the accuracy of your paperwork, remember to check your pay advice carefully each month as well as your paycheck when you receive it. If a mistake has been made, you need to contact the district immediately. If you have any questions about your paycheck, make sure you ask!

Benefits Byte

by Cheryl Frazier, FEA Benefits Rep

New Website:

Several members have experienced difficulty with the new website links listed below. However, I've gone to the site several times with no difficulty, using an iMAC at school. The site does not seem to be case sensitive. However, it is critical to login under Employees Benefits and NOT on the first screen.

Go to www.baldwinrgi.com and click on "Services" on the lower left of the page. On the next screen, click on "online login" (**small red letters** to the right of "Employee Benefits").

Then enter:

Company: **Ferndale**
User Name: **JFerndale**
Password: **885422**

Click on "My Benefits" on the upper left screen.

"Useful Web Links" will allow you to search for providers and plan information. You will need to scroll down to see the results.

Please email me if you cannot access the site: cfrazier@ferndale.wednet.edu

Dont Forget to fill out your nomination form for the Ferndale Association Officers for 2007-2008.

All nomination forms must be turned in by Thursday, April 19, 2007.

Be involved, have a voice!

Teacher Humor:

Actual Written Excuses Given to Teachers:

- Please excuse Johnnie for being. It was his father's fault.
- Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels.
- Please excuse Dianne from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps.

Our Contract - Good Reading!

by Dee Schulz

At our last Rep Council meeting, we were talking about newsletter ideas, and I decided to do an article on the release days that we all have as part of our contract. You know, that contract that is somewhere on your bookshelf, or in your desk drawer, or maybe in the back of your file cabinet. If you are anything like me, you have never really taken the time to crack open that contract and really read it. Oh, I made a half-hearted attempt when I first got hired, to make sure I knew what I was getting into. I also read parts of it when I had some issues and I needed to know my rights. But, I've never really READ the contract. Pretty sad, since I know now how hard our negotiators worked to get this contract in place which protects us and our jobs.

So, for this article, I first found my contract (it was

in the back of my bottom desk drawer), I blew off the dust, and sat down to read. It really only took me about 20 minutes to read the entire contract and I really learned a lot. I encourage all of you to sit down and read your contract.

As for our release days, here is a summary of what each full time certificated employee is entitled to:

Planning Days: Each full-time elementary teacher will receive five half-days of release time per year, with a substitute provided. Each full-time middle school teacher will receive three half days of release time per year and high school teachers will receive two half days per year. Planning days may NOT be taken on a Friday, and Mondays are discouraged. It is also suggested that teachers ask for planning days at least three days in advance. When possible, teachers should schedule planning half days back-to-back so that full day substitutes can be utilized.

If employees do not want to take release time from their classrooms, they may choose to be compensated at the curriculum rate (currently \$25.00 per hour) for planning time conducted outside the work day. Your secretary should have the necessary paperwork to fill out to be compensated for this time.

Disability and Emergency Leave: Full time certificated employees will receive twelve (12) days annual leave for illness, injury, and emergency leave, as well as to care for the employee's ill family members. Unused days accumulate to the extent allowed by the law.

For disability leave, employees should request a substitute as soon as possible. Employees wishing to take an extended leave for disability purposes may request a leave of absence.

Emergency leave is for a situation that could not be preplanned. The problem must be one of major importance, not a mere convenience.

Personal Leave: Each certificated employee is entitled to three Personal Leave days per year. This leave cannot be used to a) extend holidays or vacations, b) engage in other employment or commercial venture and/or c) for recreation.

Employees should use the standard request form, and employees are encouraged to make the request no fewer than three working days in advance.

If you need a day before or after a holiday, you will need to submit a written request. Also, no more than two teachers per elementary school and three secondary teachers per school may be out at once. Personal leave is taken out of your sick leave.

President's Pen by Tracie Morris

As more work is piled on my desk, an interesting five page packet reminded me: It is not our job to evaluate other employees.

It's becoming increasingly difficult to draw the line and say, "I'm sorry, but evaluating someone that I work closely with is not something I feel comfortable doing." But as some have learned the hard way, it can result in an uncomfortable work environment. Providing input about another employee that is assigned to your classroom is okay. But it is not our job to EVALUATE, and please be careful when you provide input. You may choose to voice your concerns, rather than put it in writing.

Please let your building reps know if you are interested in applying for a position on the FEA Executive Board. These positions require you to attend just two meetings a month. There is a stipend given to members, and you stay informed about all the important issues that effect you! Nomination forms are provided in this issue and are due by the April 19th Rep Council meeting.

You can also become involved by becoming a building rep. As a building rep, you would help to keep your building knowledgeable about important issues.

There are many ways to be involved. Thanks for all you do!

Ways to Save Money!

by Cheryl Frazier

Generic drug usage saves money! Generic drug usage not only saves money for individual members, but it improves overall group utilization and helps keep premiums down. Generic utilization by Regence members is good, accounting for two-thirds of our pharmaceutical costs.

If you take the same medications routinely (or for several months at a time), filling prescriptions through the mail can save you money! Typically, you will receive a three month supply but only pay two co-pays. If you take just one non-formulary medication with a \$30 copay, this can mean \$120 savings in one year. If you have several routine prescriptions, the savings can be substantial.

Before you run out of your current medication, ask your physician for a written prescription authorizing the maximum quantity your plan allows and for one year of refills (not allowed for some drugs). If it's a new medication, ask for two prescriptions; one to fill locally for immediate use and one to mail in.

Call the mail-order service for your plan to find out what details to include with the prescription. Regence subscribers can call Postal Prescription Services at 1-800-552-6694.

Group Health members should call Group Health Mail Order Pharmacy at 1-800-245-7979 or check on line at www.ghc.org.

**Ferndale Education Association
2006-2007 Meeting Calendar**

Location: Babe's Restaurant

Scheduled at 4:30 unless specified otherwise.

April 6, 2007	Executive Board 4:30 PM
April 19, 2007	Rep Council 4:30 PM
May 3, 2007	Executive Board 4:30 PM
May 22, 2007	Representative Council FEA Scholarship Awards 4:30 PM
June 7, 2007	Executive Board Planning Session TBA

All members are invited and *encouraged* to attend. This is the chance to meet with other FEA members, to let your voice be heard, and as an added bonus, you get a delicious meal at Babe's Restaurant absolutely free! Please come join us at any of the scheduled meetings. We'd love to have you there!

Blue Cross members should call 1-888-327-9791 to begin a new prescription by mail order or look on-line at www.premera.com/. Once you've tried mail-order services, you'll find it's easy!

Some medications can be safely split in half without compromising dosage. This can save consumers quite a bit in copays. For example, if you take 50 mg/day of a drug that can be split, and 100 mg tablets cost about the same, you would have a two month supply for one co-pay. Ask your physician if any of your medications qualify. Regence members can go to www.regencex.com and check out the "Half Tablet" link under "Benefit from Special Programs."