

FEATURES

VEBA – NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY ACRONYM

Heads up FEA members! VEBA (Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association) is coming to town. FEA will be sponsoring opportunities this spring for teachers to meet with a VEBA representative to ask questions prior to a membership vote to decide if we want to add this as a mandatory benefit. If elected by the membership, deductions would begin next year.

The VEBA Plan is an "account-based" health plan that reimburses qualified health care costs and insurance premiums for you and your family (similar to your section 125 health Flexible Spending Account). It is defined by the IRS as a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA). VEBA Plan participation is renewed annually by bargaining unit. Visit www.veba.org for more information.

Advantages

- You pay no tax on contributions, earnings, or withdrawals (claims)
- You can use your account anytime
- Your spouse and dependents are covered—even if you die (see NOTE below)
- Your unused account balance carries over from year to year; no annual "use-it-or-lose-it"
- You can invest your account among the available investment funds, including any one of four pre-mixed portfolios
- The district saves the FICA contribution

The growing cost of health care

Public employees everywhere are struggling to cope with the soaring cost of health care, particularly after retiring. Many who are eligible to retire keep working because their retirement pensions and other taxable retiree income sources aren't enough. The average 60-year-old school employee and spouse retiring today may spend **well over \$300,000 of their own money** on health care expenses and insurance premiums during retirement! Fortunately, the VEBA Plan can help.

Common funding sources for VEBA

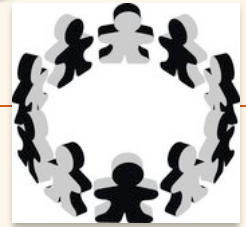
- Mandatory employee contributions (flat dollar amount); no individual elections permitted
- Annual sick leave buy back
- Retirement/separation from service sick leave cash out
- Vacation and other leave cash out
- Excess monthly benefit dollars after pooling for basic benefits

Other participating education associations

- Stanwood
- Arlington
- Blaine
- Mount Baker
- Coupeville

NOTE: Per IRS Revenue Ruling 2006-36, the VEBA Plan will be required to discontinue providing reimbursements to non-dependent heirs for expenses incurred on or after July 1, 2009. This ruling only affects benefits paid to non-dependent heirs; benefits on behalf of a surviving spouse or dependent(s) will continue to be available.

Upcoming Meetings



Thursday,
March 26
Rep Council 4:30-6:00

Thursday, April 23
Exec Board 4:30-6:00 (WECU)
Nominations Open for Officers

Thursday, April 30
Rep Council 4:30-6:00
Nominations Due

Thursday, May 7
Exec Board
4:30-6:00 (WECU)
Ballots Distributed

Thursday, May 28,
Rep Council
4:30-5:30
End of Year Dinner Grant Recipients
5:30-7:00 (Silver Reef)
Ballots for Officers Due

Wednesday, June 3
Exec Board Planning 1:00-4:00

FYI:
May 14-16 WEA Representative
Assembly in Spokane
August WEALA



The big news is our electronic survey is out. Please make sure you take this as soon as possible. We need your input to help guide our bargain through the coming weeks and months. We also may need to take a follow-up survey over the summer as we start to really narrow down the issues during the bargain. This would likely be a very brief survey -- only a couple of questions -- but your input will be vital. Make sure we have your home email so we can remain in contact with you over the summer. We need your voice to be heard. We will be using home emails to do this over the summer.

I would like to take a minute to thank Lyn Sherry, our UniServ representative, for making this eSurvey possible. When we asked you early in the year, an overwhelming majority of you expressed interest in an electronic survey. However, it was a real challenge making sure we could do this in a secure and useful manner. Lyn spent a large amount of time doing the groundwork for your team in order to make this happen. Thanks to her work, instead of the data being dissected at WEA, it will be fully accessible to us to use as we bargain. We will be able to 'cut' our data in new ways in order to best be able to see how we can represent you at the table.

As of this writing, your bargaining team has now met with the district twice. Our first meeting went very well. After introductions, we presented our Interest Statements and discussed our demand to bargain in regards to the 'snow hour' fiasco in December. We also discussed the general 'ground rules' for our bargain, which are essentially the same as last time.

At our second meeting, which takes place between writing this and its publication, we presented our first draft of our issues list. This list has been generated from our extensive information gathering this past school year. This includes our 1:1 interviews, building visits, department visits at FHS, and our bargaining forums. At this meeting, the District also presented their first draft of their Interests Statement and Issues List.

We will continue to meet with the district through the end of the school year. However, until the state legislative session is complete, it will be difficult to see the big picture in terms of what is going to happen in public education next year. This includes the budget that will need to be passed, the federal stimulus dollars, and any legislation that results from the Basic Education Task Force. Once the session is over, we will better be able to sit down with a complete picture and work to advance our interests at the table.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or one of your bargaining team members.

FEA Representatives

President::Tracie Morris
 Vice President: Dave Esser
 Secretary:Thirza Zagelow
 Treasurer: Cheryl Frazier
 FEAtures: Dee Schulz
 Legislative Rep: Susan Gelhar
 WebMaster: Ryan Mitchel

Ferndale High School:

Head Rep: Heidi Stahlberg
 Reps: Jeff Demorest, Nate Button, Beth Andres, Jed Decker, Susan Smith, Holly Wibbens, Drew Sampson, Steve Menefee, Wendy Rice

Clearview high School:

Head Rep: Boo Kaufman

Windward:

Head Rep: Chuck Schelle

Vista Middle School

Head Rep: Jay Sozanski

Rep: Amy Nysten

Horizon Middle School

Head Rep: Nancy Hudson

Rep: Melanie Helt

Beach:

Head Rep:

Central:

Head Rep: Lisa Lockwood

Reps: Michelle Taylor, Joelle Schneider, Denise Smith

Custer:

Head Rep: Lynn Kelling

Rep: Brandi Caffrey

Eagleridge:

Head Rep: Jerry Finkbonner

Reps: Leah Rochon, Patty Cornelsen,

Mt. View:

Head Rep: Cathy Cook

Reps: Jan Polen Angela George, Teresa Parke

Cascadia:

Head Rep: Christi Liese

Reps: Marcy Mclvor, Cynthia Pottle, Diane Monsen, Pat Schelling

Skyline:

Head Rep: Kathy Galbraith

Rep: Kathy Miller



President's Pen

by Tracie Morris



President Wanted! At my first president's meeting 4 years ago, I was told that the most important thing I needed to do is find my replacement. I am still thinking of running again, but the position might change a little for next year and I want to make sure everyone who would like to run has a chance to fully understand the possible changes for next year.

As most of you know, I teach 6th grade full time at Skyline Elementary. While FEA does allow your president to take a .25 release to do union business, this didn't work as it should have for me. I didn't like being out of the classroom on a sporadic schedule with a different substitute each time. I was also very sensitive to our dollars and didn't want to raise local dues.

Well if you haven't noticed, times are changing. I'm finding that more members need more support and there is more and more to do. I still enjoy the job and feel I'm doing my best to represent you and support you. Unfortunately, I'm doing most of the work at night, on weekends, and during break = BURN OUT. Is there more your president could be doing? Are you interested in running for president?

The Exec Board has been discussing for over a year the need for a half time release president. While this would mean an increase in dues, it would also mean a president that is more available. During this time of RIF, the association would also be 'saving' a half time position as well.

At this time, you pay \$11 a month in local dues. This is among the lowest local dues for our region and has not changed in more than 5 years. If FEA had a half time release president, your dues would increase, probably to around \$21 a month. Your union leadership feels it is time for Ferndale FEA to have a half time president. However, it is you, our membership, that get to have the final say. Almost every district our size has a half-time release president. It is simply time consuming to properly run an organization of our size.

Please discuss this at your building and let your building reps know how you feel. FEA Rep Council will take a vote on April 30th, so speak now!!

If this passes, there will be enough to time to express interest in the position if you would like to run for next year.

Estimators help you plan

Department of Retirement Systems (DRS) offers an online benefit estimator; a calculating tool that lets retirement plan members create a self-estimate of their retirement benefits via the agency's website. Online estimators are available for all the major retirement systems.

The estimators provide an approximate computation of your benefit for personal use and not based on your official DRS data, but rather on the information you supply. Visit the DRS website to learn more: <http://www.drs.wa.gov>

Bargaining Support Team

Thank you, thank you to all of you that have volunteered to be on the Bargaining Support Team. We really appreciate the great snacks and the words of support. Contact Dave Esser if you are interested in supporting your bargaining team.

Professional Learning Communities

A bit about ... Professional Learning Communities

How is professional development changing?

Professional development of the 21st Century is changing in dramatic ways in response to an increasing body of research supporting collaborative, process-oriented learning focused on student achievement and improved instructional practice. As a result, many schools and districts are creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across the nation, but few are putting together the necessary conditions required to implement and sustain authentic PLCs.

PLCs Done Right

Professional learning communities – when done right – can be some of the best and most rewarding professional development educators can experience. It is empowering, directly connected to the classroom, meaningful, produces results, and is research-based.

PLCs Done Wrong

Unfortunately, when done wrong, it merely adds to workload, creates additional committee work, and provides no rewards or benefits to either educators or students.

Why is WEA and other PLCWashington.org Partners Involved?

Requests for classroom connected, relevant professional development. The most recent research is compelling. PLCs inherently values the knowledge and expertise of professional educators. Many districts and schools are trying to develop PLCs without identifying and addressing the necessary conditions required to effectively implement this professional development strategy. Collaboration done right helps to lighten the workload for everyone. Districts and schools are looking for ways to “find” time for collaborative models within the regular contract day.

The Web site, www.PLCWashington.org provides a comprehensive look at professional learning communities which includes identifying the necessary conditions required to implement PLCs, team norms, procedures, study group protocols, looking at student work protocols, building trust, collaboration practices, coaching, and shared leadership.

To learn more go to: www.PLCWashington.org

WEA Learning and Education Policy Center (LEPC)

Contact: Scott Poirier

spoirier@washingtonea.org

(360) 561-0019

ALERT! Our voices have been heard in Olympia. By the time you read this, important legislation may have been rewritten that will affect all of us and our schools. Please track our progress by checking in at the WEA website. Continue to use their online tool to contact your lawmakers from home. Teachers have had a powerful impact on the new school reform efforts at the state level. Also, plan to email Rep Larsen and our senators to share your views on President Obama's proposals and federal priorities for education. We must take the lead to shape the future of our schools.