

FEAtures

Congratulations National Board Teachers!



Six teachers completed their National Board Certification in 2010! Congratulations to Ruthie Van Vleck (Skyline Elementary), Holly Priestman (Eagleridge Elementary), Tammy Alejandre (Eagleridge Elementary), Polly Rae (Eagleridge Elementary), Chris Brosell (Vista Middle) and Misty Rainwater (Ferndale High). We applaud you for taking on this huge challenge amidst your already full lives! Ferndale School District now has a total of 29 national certified teachers with four more working toward the goal in 2011.

National Board for Professional Teacher Standards is a voluntary system for certifying teachers who meet high and rigorous standards. There are 91,000 teachers across the nation who are currently Board Certified. Through hundreds of hours of analysis of teaching and learning, video portfolios, student work samples, reflection

and writing, teachers submit a 4-part portfolio and take a 6-part assessment. Many teachers report a heightened awareness of effective teaching strategies, deeper reflection on individual student learning, and many sleepless nights!

Thanks to the generosity of ConocoPhillips, each newly certified teacher received \$500 to spend on classroom materials. In the past, teachers have bought science equipment, math manipulatives, sets of books, a story rug, and other items that will be well used by students for years to come. Thank you, ConocoPhillips, for continuing to be a huge supporter of Ferndale Schools!

If you'd like more information about the process, go to HYPERLINK "<http://www.nbpts.org>" www.nbpts.org or HYPERLINK "<http://www.k12.wa.us>" www.k12.wa.us .

Do you like numbers? Do you believe data can be interesting? Do you like comparing our state to others? We have just the thing for you. Our tax dollars have provided a new Department of Ed online "Dashboard" that has all 50 states' K-12 data for 16 key indicators tied to the nation's educational goals, as well as measures of states' postsecondary systems. The Dashboard address is <http://dashboard.ed.gov/>.



Contract Review:
Maternity, Paternity, and
Adoption Leave
 by Chelsea Buckham

Your Collective Bargaining Agreement includes new language that guarantees maternity, paternity, and adoption leave.

For new mothers, the length of leave is determined and decided upon by the employee and her doctor and will be paid using accrued Disability and Emergency Leave. This means that a new mothers is not limited to a maximum paid leave of six weeks, but she can instead collaborate with her healthcare provider to determine a leave that best meets her family's needs. FMLA, which provides medical benefits, can be accessed consecutively to Maternity Leave.

New Paternity and Adoption Leave language provides five paid days of leave to members, not deducted from Disability and Emergency Leave.

If you have more questions, check out pages 22 and 23 of your contract and talk with FEA leaders at your building.



Did You Know You Can Use Your Sick Leave for Parents?

Dealing with ill/injured parents, grandparents, and adult children can be extremely challenging and difficult. Thanks to state legislation that was passed several years ago, you can use your own sick leave for this purpose. It might be a simple doctor's appointment that you need to take your parents to, or it could be a long-term illness---as long as you have sick leave, there's no limit as to the number of days you can use.

You can also use your sick leave for the care of your adult children who have given birth. You need to fill out a leave request form and note "Family Care Leave."



Meeting Dates

Thursday, March 10
 4:30-6:00 Exec Board
 WECU

Thursday, March 31
 4:30-6:00 Rep Council
 Cascadia

Wednesday, March 16
 5:30-8:00 Uniserv
 Mt. Vernon

Wed. April 20 5:30-8:00
 Uniserv Mt. Vernon

Thurs. April 21 4:30-6:00
 Exec Board WECU

Thursday, April 28
 4:30-6:00
 Rep Council Cascadia
 **Nominations Due

May 12-14 WEA Rep
 Assembly Tacoma

Thursday, May 19
 4:30-6:00 Exec Board
 WECU *Ballots Distributed

Thursday, May 26
 4:30-5:30
 Rep Council Cascadia
 **Ballots for Officers Due
 5:30-7:00 Recognition Dinner

Thursday, June 9
 1:00-3:00 Exec Retreat
 WECU

Discounts Available!

by Amy Nylén

You may already know about some of the travel, insurance, and credit card discounts available to you through your membership in the NEA and WEA. If not, there are two ways to discover some of the savings. For discounts, check out the NEA Member Benefits Discount page at http://www.neamb.com/home/productsAndServices_750.htm?category=Discounts, to get started. There are hundreds of discounts available to us as members, including savings on products ranging from publishers like Carson-Dellosa to flower orders on 1-800-FLOWERS to appliances from Whirlpool, KitchenAid, and Maytag. There are also discounts on services like tax preparation through H&R Block (\$20 off at participating locations).

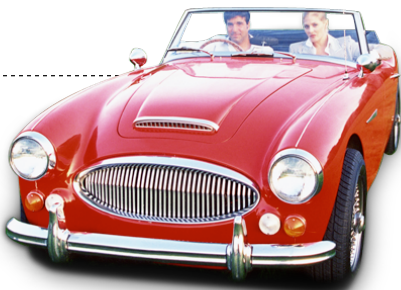
The second way to search for savings is to go to the NEA Member Benefits Home Page at http://www.neamb.com/home/1207_4464.htm. This page is divided into five categories: Money, Everyday Living, Health & Wellness, Professional Resources, and Travel & Leisure. Under each category is a list of links; for most of these, Benefits is the first choice. Click on it to find a list of discounts. Accessing the Member Benefits page also gives links to informational guides

related to each category. We can access financial, fitness, lesson planning, or travel advice under the Tools link for each category.



You can also sign up for NEA's Click and Save program at http://www.neamb.com/home/1207_2678.htm. Registration for this program is free, and provides you with many links to online retailers' sale pages, and other discounts. You can accumulate points in a reward program as well. Current retailers in this program are Target, Best Buy, Home Depot, Nordstrom and--my favorite--the Lego Store. Savings change frequently, and you can opt to receive e-mail notifications of current deals.

If you are considering major purchases, financial decisions, or traveling, please make NEA Member Services one of your first stops in planning. You will be surprised at how much you can save!



Message from Susan Gelhar, FEA Legislative Rep

EDUCATORS: you could provide valuable input to the legislators in Olympia as they struggle to carry out school "reform" during this economic crisis. Please get involved!

From **State Representative Jeff Morris** (40th) Legislative Update, February 11, 2011

"We are finishing the fifth week of the session, and heading right into the first major milestone – policy committee cut-off on February 17. All bills dealing with policy issues must be passed out of committee by the deadline so that they can be scheduled for a vote by the House."

The House unanimously approved timely tax relief for businesses and much needed help for jobless workers, providing opportunity for businesses to grow and the unemployed to learn new job skills. The measure will reduce unemployment tax for 90% of employers. The bill also brings relief for thousands of Washington families hit hard by this persistent recession:

- The bill makes training programs more accessible, allowing more workers to learn new skills and build better resumes for their job search in high-demand fields.
- Washington's unemployed workers will also qualify for the extended benefits passed by Congress last December.
- Workers who are laid off during the rest of 2011 will receive a temporary \$25 bump in their weekly benefits.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that for every \$1 of benefits, \$2 of purchasing power is created in the economy. Unemployment benefits are among the best kinds of economic stimulus because recipients immediately spend it, circulating money into local economies. That's why its economic impact is magnified." end quote –Rep Jeff Morris

***Note:** Bills have until Feb 25th to clear Ways & Means. March 7th is the cutoff date for floor action in the house of origin. Then the scramble starts over, with fewer surviving bills. Ever wonder why we have so many twin "companion" bills? Doubles your chances of surviving this mash-up. There are thousands of legislative actions each session. The bill descriptions (with links to the full text) can be quickly searched on sites such as www.washingtonvotes.org by category. Their analysis and comments may seem biased, but it's a useful tool.

For example, this is one of the bills on their "Most Viewed" list: [2011 Senate Bill 5399](#)

Prioritizing school employee workforce reductions and assignments.

Introduced by Sen. Rodney Tom (Medina) on Jan 24, 2011 to provide that when reductions in the workforce occur due to enrollment decline or revenue loss, no-renewal of the employment contracts of any certificated classroom teacher must be based on performance evaluation ratings, with the lowest rated teachers being non-

renewed first. Seniority takes precedence where teachers have the same evaluation ratings. Referred to the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee.

There are HUNDREDS of bills related to education and children, some you'd have to see to believe. We don't have a champion for our cause in the Legislature. None of the legislators in our two districts has expertise in our field. They do not sponsor education bills, nor do they include school issues in their newsletters. However, all claim to value education as the state's paramount duty. It's our job to let them know what schools need to improve the outlook for today's students.

For those residing in the Ferndale area, one of your legislators is Ferndale School District parent, Doug Ericksen. This bio is from his home page: "**State Senator Doug Ericksen** serves the 42nd District. He is in his first term as Senator after serving 12 years in the House of Representatives. He serves on the Transportation, Financial Institutions, Housing and Insurance and Higher Education and Workforce Development Committees.

His legislative priorities include providing trans-partisan solutions to create jobs, providing accountability in state government, building a world-class trail system to connect communities, and offering tax relief. Doug and his wife, Tasha, are raising their two daughters in Ferndale."

Social Security Tax Decreases---Think About Investing the Difference in a DCP

Did you know that the employee portion of the Social Security tax will decrease from 6.2% of your income to 4.2% for all of 2011? Instead of just absorbing this slight increase in take-home pay this year, you might want to think about investing it in the state's Deferred Compensation Program (DCP). DCP is an alternative investment plan that's administered by the State of Washington, and is available to all employees of the school district.

DCP allows you to set aside pre-tax contributions each month, similar to a 403(b) plan. Because DCP is managed by the state, however, it does not have the typical charges that employees might encounter with private investment firms. Depending on your tax bracket, it may be possible for you to contribute to a DCP plan without substantially reducing your take-home pay; in some cases, your take-home pay may actually increase. That's because your contribution reduces the income on which your income tax is calculated, so your reduction in income tax may substantially offset the cost of your DCP contribution. Investments in DCP grow tax-free until you withdraw them, presumably at retirement when you're in a lower income tax bracket.

Here are some features of the DCP: Deductions are made directly from your monthly paycheck. You can change your contribution amount at any time. The plan has low administrative fees (0.14% annually). No federal income taxes are withheld from your contributions. You can access your account easily on-line. Distributions are available



without penalty at any age when you separate from employment. The plan has a low minimum monthly contribution of \$30. For those under age 50, you can contribute up to \$16,500 per year. For those over 50, the maximum is \$22,000 for the year. There's a broad range of investment options available to you, and you can change your investment selection at any time. There are a variety of payment options once you separate from employment or retire. In the event of your death, your beneficiary will receive payment of your funds.

Use this link to get more information about the State of Washington Deferred Compensation Program, or call 1-888-327-5596.



Certificate Expiring?

If you have a teaching certificate that requires you to complete 150 continuing education clock hours (15 credit hours) every 5

years, failure to do so could result in the loss of your certificate. SPI does **NOT** send reminders, and the District is not required to (but usually does) send letters of reminders to those with expiring certificates.

Check to see when your teaching certificate expires and be sure to keep current with your continuing education credit hour obligation. Do not wait until the last minute as you might not be able to complete the

requirements prior to the expiration date. **YOU WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT PAY IF YOUR CERTIFICATE EXPIRES.** In addition, once you obtain new certification regardless of the type of certification you held previously, you will now have to meet the newer professional certification requirements imposed on new teachers.

YOUR FEA REPRESENTATIVES



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FEAatures: Dee Schulz

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WebMaster: Ryan Mitchel

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WEA/Uniserv: Tara Quackenbush

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Head Rep: Boo Kaufman

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Vista Middle School

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Head Rep: Jan Polen

Reps:

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Head Rep: Christi Liese

Reps: Diane Monson, Marcy McIvor, Cynthia Pottle, Bud Larson,

Skyline:

Head Rep: Kathy Galbraith, Kathy Miller

Rep: Cindy Lower

Thank you to all that are actively involved in our FEA. All of our members stay informed because of you. We all appreciate you. If anyone would like to attend one of our meetings, feel free! The dates for all of our upcoming meetings are listed on the front page of this addition.
