

# FEAtures

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## **Negotiators hold building meetings** **Optional days, planning time, and calendar are issues**

**by Bud Larson**

FEA Head Negotiator

Members of the FEA Negotiations Team have been making their way around the district talking to members in building meetings, where there's been good support and helpful discussion. One meeting remains on the calendar, Custer on Wed., Dec. 7, at 4:00 p.m. Everyone who hasn't talked with the negotiators is welcome at the Custer meeting.

Often, we're asked by members what can be done to show support during bargaining. This year one of the most important actions you can take is to use all your optional days by next April. We want to send a strong message that optional time is valued and that processing the paperwork is costly. Last year over \$50,000 optional days money wasn't claimed by

teachers. The district didn't have to pay out \$50,000 and didn't have to process the paperwork required to claim those dollars. By claiming all our optional days early and often, we can show the district that a simpler paperwork system can benefit everyone. This strengthens our position to negotiate for reduced paperwork.

Planning time will again be a major issue. If you have ideas or know of districts that have better planning time models, please contact one of the Negotiators. We need to hear from you.

This month we begin the calendar adoption process to decide future school year calendars. The district is doing a survey of the community and school staff to get input on the calendar. Rocky Diaz

See **CONTRACT**, Page 2

## **PSE remains in mediation with district**

**by Susan Browne**

FEAtures Editor

Ferndale Public School Employees Union (P.S.E.) Negotiators meet again today with a mediator and the district in a continued effort to bargain a new contract. P.S.E. has been working since Aug. 31 without a collective bargaining agreement. Informational pickets have marched outside the Sept. and Oct. school board meetings.

At a Nov. 3 meeting, P.S.E. Negotiators again presented their

issues, this time with estimated costs attached. P.S.E. Negotiator Joey McAlpine said she had

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## President's Pen

### From FEA President Tracie Morris

42-465-47

What do these numbers mean to us?

Washington ranks 42nd nationally in education spending per student. Funding has decreased \$465 per student in the past 10 years, and Washington ranks 47th in the nation for class size.

With 70+% of our funding coming from the state, it's time for all of us to get actively involved and improve these numbers. About 80 local Association presidents met Oct. 29 in Federal Way to discuss the WEA Education Excellence campaign. This campaign is aimed at finding a permanent stable funding source for public education in Washington State. Funding campaign objectives were presented to Head Reps at the Nov. Executive Board meeting. Highlights include educating the public about school funding, building partnerships and coalitions to advance the cause of

education funding, increasing member involvement, and developing stronger local Associations with training and support. WEA and locals need to work more closely together. We've been asked to provide current email addresses of all our members, to increase everyone's awareness of what's going on in the Education Excellence campaign.

#### Air Quality

Last month, WEA Fourth Corner UniServ provided air quality kits to most of our buildings. See your Head Rep if you want to use a kit to study air quality in your classroom. If you believe there's a problem, keep detailed documentation. Make a report to your building Safety Committee and to your principal. You may then need to report to maintenance and the district office. If you make a report, please send a copy to your building rep or to me at Skyline.

## P.S.E.

P.S.E. from Page 1

expected the district would have proposed its own dollar amounts before now. P.S.E. issues include longevity steps in salary, salary increases for specialized paraeducators and paraeds who work with very high needs students, reclassification of current "educational assistants" as paraeducators, and a salary increase for elementary head food service workers.

P.S.E. is also asking that both of the 2 personal days in the current contract be taken out of sick leave. This change will provide paraeducators and food service workers the same advantage building secretaries have now. Currently, the second P.S.E. personal day is a day with no pay. Regarding the recent cuts made by the district in work hours during late arrival days, P.S.E. has proposed that these hours be reinstated on a voluntary basis for those paraeds who need planning time or have other duties when students aren't in school.

## Contract is your guide when questioned by administrators

NEGOTIATORS from Page 1

(Mt. View) and Judy Thomas (Beach) will represent FEA on the committee that will prepare the survey.

The Calendar Committee will use the survey results to determine the calendars on the ballot. Our representatives are Bob Kandiko (Horizon), Jay Sozanski (Vista), Robin Peters (F.H.S.), and Terry Nylen (Mt. View). The district has agreed to provide at least 5 days for voting. The calendar vote will be in Feb. with a decision in March.

Our collective bargaining agreement, our "contract," is a document that spells out our working conditions, duties, and compensation. Use it as a living, breathing document that guides your interactions with administrators. We often give away our employee rights with a simple, "Oh, okay, that's alright with me," when an administrator, a colleague, or a secretary tells us how things should be done. For example, "Can we shorten your lunchtime during early release days? It's only 10 minutes less," or, at an elementary, "Can we use

time before school on early release days to meet about building goals?" Your answer to these types of questions must be, "No." We have negotiated time and employee rights so you can do your best job. Don't give them away. Does this need to be a confrontation? No. Discuss the issue, make alternative suggestions, and refer to contract language. This language protects you. Contact your Building Rep, an FEA officer, or a Negotiator if you have questions or feel you need help.

## Flexible Benefits Plan can save tax \$\$

by Susan Browne  
FEAtures Editor

If you have health care expenses not covered by medical insurance, dependent care expenses such as day care costs, or individually-owned health insurance premiums, you can save money by enrolling in a Flexible Benefits/IRC Section 125 program. Option I, Out-of-Pocket Health Care Expenses, allows you to set aside pre-tax dollars to pay out-of-pocket health care costs for you and your family, including insurance co-pays. Option II sets up the same type of tax free reimbursement account for child and/or elder care expenses. The deadline for submitting signed and dated enrollment forms to the district Payroll Office is Wed., Nov. 23. Watch this week for an Enrollment Packet in your school mailbox.

**Informational meetings are scheduled for Wed., Nov. 16, at the following times and locations:**

8:15 a.m. in the Skyline Library

2:45 p.m. in F.H.S. room 504

4:00 p.m. in the Mt. View Library

You're welcome to attend any meeting.

Another Flexible Benefits option is for group insurance premiums. This option is automatic if, after pooling, you have out-of-pocket premium costs. If you want to pay taxes on these premiums, you need to "opt out."

If you have questions, call Alysya at 9204.

### How many Optional Days?

Elementary: 11 1/2 Optional Days

Secondary: 11 Optional Days

Everyone has one Professional Development Day

## Health Care Happenings Prescriptions by mail

by Cheryl Frazier  
FEA Benefits Rep

If you take the same medication(s) routinely or for several months at a time, filling prescriptions through the mail can save you money! Typically, you will receive a 3-month supply but only pay 2 co-pays. If you take just one non-formulary medication with a \$30 co-pay, this can mean \$120 in 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 2 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 (PO Box 2718, Portland, OR 97208-2718). Group Health members should call Group Health Mail Order Pharmacy at 1-800-245-7979 (PO Box 34383, Seattle, WA 98124).

Once you've tried mail-order services, you'll find it's easy to refill and add prescriptions.

Your FEA Benefits Reps are Cheryl Frazier (Skyline) and Rebecca Montgomery (Horizon). Please contact by email if you have questions or concerns.

### Member benefits online

Medical, dental, and vision plan details are available online at [instantbenefits.net](http://instantbenefits.net). The password is **WEIC**. Provider lists are updated regularly.

## Optional day forms: How to say what you'll do

by Lynn Kelling  
Custer Head Rep

To claim optional days, you must complete an Optional Day Checklist Form for every full and half day, and get administrator approval of your activity. Here are some phrases you may want to use to describe activities that agree with the evaluation criteria listed on the form.

### Instructional Skill

- Design/develop units/lessons that meet the GLEs
- Plan/modify lessons to meet student needs
- Plan needed modification of instruction from assessment results

### Classroom Management

- Rearrange classroom to maximize learning space
- Plan/adjusting groups
- Prepare for buddies

### Professional Preparation

- Read literature to keep updated on educational practices
- Collegial/independent activities to work towards improvement
- Modify grade level tasks/materials

### Knowledge of Subject Matter

- Implement suggestions from principal's observations
- Align curriculum to GLEs

See **PHRASES**, Page 4

## Spotlight on new members

by Susan Browne  
FEAtures Editor

Misty Rainwater did her student teaching last year in the F.H.S. Early College program and liked it so much she decided to stay. This year Misty is a first-year teacher at F.H.S. teaching Early College Academy, EC freshman and sophomore English, and Transitions.

Early College is a program to help under-represented student populations enter college, and Misty said she especially likes the opportunities the program provides to get to know students better. Misty student taught with Donna Sargent. She earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Washington and did her Master's at Western.

Misty was born in Everett, but she grew up in Philadelphia and Appleton, Wisconsin. She said Appleton is a lot like Ferndale. It's bigger, but the downtown is very similar, with most of the businesses on one main street. The high school she attended in Appleton is about the same size as Ferndale.

Now Misty lives in Fairhaven with Chris and their hyperactive, obsessive-compulsive dog, Diego. She appreciates that it's quiet in Fairhaven, and she enjoys being near the water. When she's not prepping for classes or otherwise working at school, Misty enjoys camping and she regularly plays soccer. Last year she injured her arm in a soccer game, and then had to cope with having her arm in a sling along with the usual challenges of student teaching. She not only survived—she thrived!

## Phrases

OPTIONAL DAY from Page 3

- Plan implementation of curriculum/EALRs
- Research to create new lessons/materials

### Handling Student Discipline and Attendance Problems

- Phone calls/meetings with parents
- Hold students accountable for work
- Record grades and correct assignments

### Interest in Teaching Pupils

- Organize materials/learning centers
- Make graphs/certificates to motivate students
- Plan for routines

### Communication with Parents

- Report card preparation
- Prepare newsletter
- Write progress reports
- Make parent phone calls

## Retirement seminar Nov. 19 at WWU

Washington State Department of Retirement Systems will present several retirement seminars next Sat., Nov. 19, at Western Washington University. The multiple sessions will cover TRS Plans 1, 2, and 3, and include pension planning workshops. For additional information and to sign up online, go to [drs.wea.gov](http://drs.wea.gov). *Retirement Outlook* is also at this site.

## News Bites

- There's a high cost to low prices. [www.wakeupwalmart.com](http://www.wakeupwalmart.com) was recommended as an informative site by Mike Hatfield, United Food and Commercial Workers Union President, at the Oct. UniServ meeting.
- Retirement workshop will be held locally, starting Feb. 1, for FEA and Meridian EA members. Carl Taylor, WEA-Retired, will conduct 6 Wed. sessions, 4:30-6:30 p.m. Registration information and location available soon.

## FEA Rep Council Meeting Calendar 2005-06

December 1	6:15 a.m.
January 19	4:30 p.m.
February 16	4:30 p.m.
March 23	6:15 a.m.
April 20	4:30 p.m.
May 18	4:30 p.m.

All meetings will be held at Babe's Restaurant in Ferndale.

## Question? Concern? Here's who to contact

WEA Fourth Corner UniServ  
Council Rep Skip Williams  
Phone: 360-733-3344

FEA President Tracie Morris  
email: [traciemorris@comcast.net](mailto:traciemorris@comcast.net) or  
[tmorris@ferndale.wednet.edu](mailto:tmorris@ferndale.wednet.edu)

*FEAtures* is published 11 times a year, August through June, to inform Association members of FEA activities, negotiated policies and district-wide points of interest. Letters, guest columns, announcements, and story ideas are welcome. Send items to Susan Browne, Ferndale High School, x9282, [suebrowne@ferndale.wednet.edu](mailto:suebrowne@ferndale.wednet.edu)  
Please submit copy electronically using MS WORD.