

Early Edition of Quick Notes: Wednesday, March 19, 2008
Provided by the Kennewick Education Association
(509) 783-6319
www.kennewick-ea.org
mshaw@washingtonea.org

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WE HAVE A CALENDAR FOR 2008-09

The calendar ballots were tabulated last Friday. Almost every KEA building representative got their ballots returned (only two failed to turn them in), which is a phenomenal achievement. Kudos to our building reps! Calendar A, which is attached, will be the calendar for the 2008-09 academic year. The vote was 63% for Calendar A and 37% for Calendar B. Christmas break will be from December 22 – January 2, 2008, and spring break is scheduled for March 30 – April 3, 2009. Pasco School District will share those vacation times. To the best of my knowledge Richland has not yet decided what, if anything, they will be changing about their calendar.

ZOOMERANG SURVEY COMING TO A COMPUTER NEAR YOU

At last night's RA there was a discussion led by DeAnne Wiley, a first grade teacher at Edison, and Leslie Bedke, KEA's Uniserv rep, regarding the WASL and the race for our next Supt. of Public Instruction. A copy of "WASL: Did You Know" fact sheet will soon be appearing in your boxes at school. This is simply an informational flyer. WEA has asked each local association to get an idea of how strongly their members feel about the WASL and the leadership at OSPI. This is a perfect opportunity for KEA to do a trial run using our newly purchased Zoomerang software. Next Monday, March 24, Marsha will send out an OSPI Temperature Check, a copy of which is attached to this edition of QN, to the e-mail addresses submitted to KEA by members. You will have until midnight on Friday, March 28, to respond via Zoomerang. If KEA does not have a personal e-mail address for you, or if two of you share an e-mail address, Marsha will send one of you a hard copy of the Temperature Check in the pony. (Only one person at each e-mail address is able to receive the survey.) Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the WASL and OSPI leadership, and return the survey to KEA by Friday, March 28. Results of this survey will be shared with WEA, and discussed at WEA Representative Assembly in Spokane. Do you think it's possible there is statewide dissatisfaction with Terry and her WASL?

"SWEATER DAY"

Tomorrow, March 20th, Mr. Rogers would have celebrated his 80th birthday. All around the country people are going to wear sweaters as a tribute to Mr. Rogers. At the beginning of each show, Mr. Rogers would enter, hang up his coat, put on a cardigan sweater (his mother had knitted all of the sweaters he wore on the show), and then switch from his street shoes to sneakers.

NEA-RA and VEBA VOTES

Ballots for KEA delegates to NEA-RA and VEBA I Plan are now in buildings. Ballots for these two measures must be returned to the KEA office by Friday, March 28, 2008.

NEA-RA: The names of the two members elected to represent KEA at the national assembly must be submitted to WEA by April 10, 2008. Six members have been nominated, which necessitates an election.

VEBA: Each year KEA members must vote on whether or not to continue participating in VEBA I, a medical savings plan. The 2007-08 school year was the first year that KEA members have been able to participate, although the administrators in our district have done so for several years. This plan allows participants to put money into a medical savings account that can be accessed by them now or in the future. When you vote, be sure to indicate your age bracket. It is possible that one age bracket would vote to participate at 0% (hence, not really participate), but the other three age brackets vote to continue their participation, so each vote is important.

CRYSTAL APPLE AWARDS

Congratulations to Patty Escamilla, second-grade bilingual teacher at Amistad, and to Vicky Smoot, a science teacher at Horse Heaven Hills! They were each honored with a Crystal Apple award last Thursday evening for their outstanding contributions to their students and their dedication to our profession.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE DUE MARCH 25

The deadline to submit applications for the KEA and Bob Mars scholarships is March 25, 2008. Applications must be to the KEA office by 4:00 PM that day to be considered.

RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS

There are two retirement workshops on the horizon:

- DRS Retirement Workshop ~ 6-7:30 PM on Friday, April 4, 2008, at Tri-Tech. This workshop will only discuss the DRS plan.
- WEA Southeast Retirement Seminar ~ 9 AM – 3 PM on Saturday, April 19, 2008, at Southridge High School. This workshop covers many different aspects of retirement, including finances, health care options, social security information, etc.

These workshops are sponsored by WEA-Southeast. Members who wish to attend need to register by calling (783-6318) or e-mailing (mjoy@washingtonea.org) Michelle Joy. They are free to KEA/WEA members. Lunch is provided to members for the all-day workshop; if you bring a spouse/significant other you may purchase their lunch for \$11.00.

DATES TO REMEMBER

March 25	Last day to turn in KEA and Bob Mars scholarship applications
April 2	Deadline to register for DRS Retirement Seminar
April 4	Retirement Seminar at Tri-Tech: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
April 15	Deadline to register for WEA-SE Retirement Seminar
April 19	Retirement Seminar at SRHS: 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
April 21	Informational meeting RE: NCLB & Master's

HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND

Mary and Marsha

Thursday, March 13, 2008
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CALENDAR

All ballots must be to the KEA office no later than 4:00 PM this Friday, March 14, 2008, in order to be counted. If you want to have input into next year's calendar, you need to mark your ballot, return it to your building rep, and sign the signature page. (According to KEA by-laws, if there are more ballots than signatures in any group of ballots, those ballots cannot be included in the tally.) Check with your building reps to make sure they will be able to drop the ballots off at the KEA office by Friday at 4 PM. Please contact Marsha if you need more ballots or if you're going to need help delivering them. At this point in the week, do not rely on the pony to get them to the KEA office on time – please drive them out here. We want your vote to count as much as you want it to count, but we need your help to make that happen.

NEA-RA and VEBA

There are two issues that will require a vote by the membership: (1) delegates to NEA-RA must be chosen, and (2) the membership must decide whether or not to continue the VEBA I Plan, a medical savings account.

NEA-RA: Nominations for NEA Representative Assembly, which will be in Washington, D.C. this summer from July 1-6, closed on March 11, 2008. The names of the members elected to represent KEA must be in to WEA by April 10, 2008. KEA will pay for two KEA members to attend this national assembly. Six members have been nominated, which necessitates an election.

VEBA: Every year KEA members must vote on whether or not to continue participating in the VEBA I, a medical savings plan. The 2007-08 school year was the first year that KEA members have been able to participate, although the administrators in our district have done so for several years. This plan allows participants to put money into a medical savings account that can be accessed by them now or in the future.

Ballots for both issues will be sent to the building reps next week. The building reps will have until Friday, March 28, 2008, to return them. We realize this vote is on the heels of the calendar vote, but felt the calendar needed to be settled quickly due to the angst surrounding it.

NCLB & HERITAGE MASTERS IN EDUCATION

Barb Pisel-Wilbur, one of our CPEs, received a handout entitled: *Master of Education: Professional Studies in Teaching and Learning with National Board Certified Teacher Preparation (32 Total Credits)*. It appears as if a teacher would be able to obtain a Master's degree in Education while simultaneously working toward NCLB. Barb is hoping to arrange an information night in Kennewick, but if that doesn't happen, there is already an informational meeting scheduled for April 21, 2008, at 4:15 PM at Robert Frost Elementary School in Pasco. Kennewick teachers are welcome to attend that meeting.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The following news release was received in the KEA office this morning, Thursday, March 13, 2008:

"You did it!

Thanks in part to your e-mails and calls to legislators and Gov. Chris Gregoire, the supplemental state budget released Wednesday includes half a percent COLA restoration for all WEA members covered by Initiative 732, in addition to the mandated 3.9 percent COLA.

Many K-12 employees will also receive an additional salary equity increase in the 2008-09 school year, which will bring the total state pay increase to nearly 6 percent from some WEA members.

WEA President Mary Lindquist commended state lawmakers for both supporting all-day kindergarten and improving educator salaries in the budget plan.

Lindquist specifically thanked Gov. Chris Gregoire, House Speaker Frank Chopp and Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown for their leadership. The additional 0.5 percent COLA restoration covers teachers, support staff and faculty at community and technical colleges whose voter-mandated COLAs were suspended in 2003-05.

The budget plan also includes increased funding for libraries, support staff and general school district costs. It also funds a bill that counts National Board bonuses toward retirement. The Legislature must pass a budget by midnight March 13, which is when the session ends.

In these tough economic times, the supplemental budget represents progress and is a significant show of support for public schools, Lindquist said. The state's budget reserves took a \$400 million hit last month when the state revenue forecast came in lower than expected. Lindquist said it will be important for state lawmakers to address the overall lack of adequate school funding in the 2009 legislative session."

'Thank you' to all KEA members who were able to e-mail their legislators last week on such short notice! When we speak as one, our voice is difficult to ignore.

RETIREMENT – 2 APRIL WORKSHOPS TO CONSIDER

Workshop #1: If you have questions about your retirement plan there will be a workshop at Tri-Tech on Friday, April 4, 2008. This workshop is for Plans I, II and III. It was scheduled for this date because DRS (Department of Retirement Systems) also puts on a workshop the next day (Saturday, April 5) for other professions using a DRS plan, such as police officers and fire fighters. They offer a special workshop for teachers in the Tri-Cities area because they realize it impacts a large number of teachers and are trying to accommodate our specific needs. This workshop addresses questions only about the different DRS plans. To register for this workshop please contact WEA Southeast by calling 783-6318 or e-mail mjoy@washingtonea.org. Make sure to include your name, local and which DRS Plan (I, II or III) you're enrolled in.

Workshop #2: WEA Southeast is sponsoring a workshop on Saturday, April 19, 2008, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. It will have mini-sessions on topics rather than the plan itself. This workshop is designed to answer retirement questions about other aspects of retirement: finances, health insurance options, social security information, legislation impacting retirement, adjustments to consider when you retire, etc. The workshop is free to WEA members, and will include a "delicious box lunch," but if you want to bring a friend or a spouse you will need to pay \$11.00 for their lunch. You can register by e-mailing Michelle Joy at mjoy@washingtonea.org or by calling 783-6319.

SENIORITY LIST

The in-district seniority list is now available on KEA's website. Click on "Special Links" after you get to the website. It lists seniority as of August 31, 2007, so the current year has not yet been included. Please look at the seniority list and, if you think there is an error, please contact Marsha (783-6319).

NEXT RESPONSIBILITY SCHEDULE PAYMENT AT THE END OF MARCH

The 3 payments for the Responsibility Scheduled are at the end of November, March, and June, be looking for this payment on your March paycheck. These dates were chosen as follows:

- November – right before winter break
- March – right before spring break and taxes deadlines
- June – right at summer vacations, loss of extracurricular stipends during the summer, summer schools needs, to meet retirement deadlines

AND YET ONE MORE GOOD REASON TO BELONG TO KEA/WEA

Members of WEA are now able to get a discount at the Hogue Cellars tasting room in Prosser, WA. If you present your 2007-08 WEA membership card you will receive 20% off your wine purchases and 10% off their merchandise. If you decide to go wine tasting please remember to have a designated driver along ☺

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Friday, March 7, 2008
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CALENDAR

On February 26, 2008, at KEA Representative Assembly, a somewhat lengthy discussion was held regarding the calendar. Ultimately a motion was passed unanimously by the reps to have the calendar committee develop two calendars which the membership would then be allowed to vote on. (Or, for you English teachers out there: ...”on which the membership would then be allowed to vote.”) The ballots for the calendar are in the pony or may have already arrived at your school. Your representative has until next Friday at 4:00 PM to complete the voting and get the ballots returned to the KEA office. Members of the KEA Executive Board will begin counting ballots at that time (4:00 PM Friday, March 14th), and votes received after counting has been completed will not be included in the tabulation. Please do your part in helping your KEA building representative do their job. Return your ballot in a timely manner, and when you return it make sure you sign the signature page.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION NEEDED ASAP

Our elected leaders in Olympia have almost finished this session, but they haven't finished their work for Washington's schools. Washington ranks 46th in the nation in class size (does anyone remember the chant “Stack ‘em deep, Teach ‘em cheap”?), 45th in per pupil spending and dead-last on the West Coast in teachers' pay. Washington teachers earn \$3K less than the national average and \$12K less than other educators on the West Coast. Right now lawmakers are writing a final budget and they must finish by March 13th. Please send an e-mail to Gov. Christine Gregoire today (www.governor.wa.gov/contact/default.asp) and to your legislator urging them to support the 1% COLA restoration for school employees. E-mail addresses for legislators are: Senator Jerome Delvin delvin.jerome@leg.wa.gov
Representative Larry Haler haler.larry@leg.wa.gov
Representative Shirley Hankins hankins.shirley@leg.wa.gov

It's important to send a message to our elected officials, but please do not send the message using your e-mail from a school district computer!

NEA-RA NOMINATIONS

Nominations for NEA Representative Assembly are open until March 11, 2008. It is going to be held in Washington, D.C., this summer from July 1, 2008, through July 6, 2008. Expenses are paid by KEA. When nominating a member, please confirm with them that they are interested in attending. To nominate someone, and, yes, you may nominate yourself, please call Marsha at 783-6319. It's a great experience, and this year's NEA-RA will be exciting, in part, because it's an election year. Plus, there is nothing like viewing the Fourth of July fireworks in our nation's capital!

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GROUP HEALTH UPDATE

The Group Health Vision Center is closing its Kennewick and Yakima offices sometime this spring, and transitioning vision care to a network of local optometrists. All those enrolled in a Group Health plan should be receiving notification by mail within the near future, but if you have questions please call Group Health Vision Center at 735-4953.

ELEMENTARY REPORT CARD UPDATE

At February's RA, Kathy Killand presented the electronic elementary report card that is being piloted for grades 4 and 5. (Thanks, Kathy!) The presentation was very informative; Kathy answered several questions and shared the snafus she has encountered. It appears that next fall this report card will be available for teachers in grades 4 and 5 to use.

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