



### Washoe Education Association Monthly Newsletter

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- **SICK LEAVE BANK GUIDELINES UPDATE** ... pg 3

#### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- December 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Nominations Open for NSEA Board of Directors
- December 10<sup>th</sup>**  
NSEA Board Nominations  
Close at 5:00pm
- December 21<sup>st</sup> - January 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
Winter Break  
WEA Office Closed
- January 7<sup>th</sup>**  
Retirement Seminar: Topic TBA  
WEA Office  
4:15pm
- January 13<sup>th</sup>**  
Rep Council  
WEA Office  
4:30pm
- January 14<sup>th</sup>**  
Retirement Seminar: Topic TBA  
WEA Office  
4:15pm
- January 18<sup>th</sup>**  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
WEA Office Closed
- January 21<sup>st</sup>**  
Retirement Seminar: Topic TBA  
WEA Office  
4:15pm
- January 28<sup>th</sup>**  
Retirement Seminar: Topic TBA  
WEA Office  
4:15pm

*Please note that the January Retirement Seminar dates published in the WEA Calendar Handbook are incorrect.*

# The Political Season Begins Once Again

*Ken Buhrmann / WEA President*

Many times I hear the question, “Why should teachers participate in the political arena?” Members long ago embraced the fact that politics affect every part of their professional lives. The range of how teachers’ lives are affected is wide and varied. Funding for public schools, salaries and retirement benefits are just a few of the very important ways “politics” affect how we do our job in the classroom. Lobbying and endorsing candidates has become a regular part of participation in the overall process of political life for teachers and their association.

As of the date of this publication, there are several announced candidates for the U.S. Senate seat currently occupied by Senator Harry Reid, as well as announced candidates for the House of Representative seat held by Dean Heller. There are at least four announced candidates for Governor: incumbent Jim Gibbons, Rory Reid, Brian Sandoval, and Mike Montandon. Besides the office of governor, there is the Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and Attorney General’s seats open, as well as vacant legislative seats that need to be filled.

NSEA is in the process of sending out questionnaires to candidates and setting up interviews for continuing endorsements. Only previously endorsed incumbents are eligible to be considered for “continuing support endorsement.” This type of endorsement can be given fairly early in the campaign process. This helps our “friends” who are running for re-election.

How does this work, then? Early in the campaign year, NSEA’s Lobby Team reviews the performance of previously endorsed incumbents. The lobby team can send candidates a questionnaire, bring candidates in for a personal interview, or do all of the above. Based on all available information, the Lobby Team makes a decision on which candidates to recommend for continuing endorsements. When this is done, those recommendations will be sent to WEA and other local associations for their approval. The WEA board may or may not concur with those recommendations. Those recommendations that are accepted then go to the NSEA Board for final approval. Candidates are then informed about the endorsement. If there is no endorsement received in a race, then that race is considered to be an “open seat.” In an “open seat race,” NSEA invites all candidates who have filed to run to go through our endorsement process.

At the close of candidate filing (March 12th this campaign year) a list is compiled of all candidates who should be invited to participate in our endorsement process. The official NSEA questionnaire is then mailed out to them. NSEA will then notify WEA and other local affiliates about which candidates have completed and returned the questionnaire to NSEA. At that point, WEA’s appointed interview team will interview the local candidates. The interview team then makes recommendations to WEA’s Board of Directors. The board then acts upon the recommendations and sends those they...

*.....continued on page 3*

# Assessment Update

*Paul Richter/PPA&A Assessment Division*

## Success in Reducing Testing Irregularities

2008-2009 saw a significant drop in the number of testing irregularities in Washoe County School District. This drop, we believe, is directly linked to the care and attention that teachers and their administrators pay to the responsible discharge of their assessment duties. We appreciate your diligence and attention to detail when administering all assessments.

When it comes to high-stakes testing like the CRTs and HSPEs, details count. Paying attention to detail also pays off with tests carrying lower stakes, like the benchmark assessments, common school-wide assessment and classroom assessment. Taking care of the details helps yield accurate and useful information that can inform instruction within the Tier I core curriculum and helps everyone successfully implement Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2).

## Assessment and Instruction Resources

The state and local assessment cycle is in full swing for the 2009-2010 school year. Your building administrator has conducted annual assessment training for you and your staff by now. The WCSD assessment division suggests that, prior to each large-scale assessment administration, you review key parts of the WCSD Primer for Testing. Our suggestions for repeated review throughout the school year:

- Points of Interest for Special Needs Students (page 6)
- WCSD Local Assessments (Page 7)
- Important Security Reminders for Test Administrators (page 17)
- An Appropriate Testing Environment (page 18)

You can access the Primer online at [http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/docs/public-policy-accountability-assessment/Assessments/09-10\\_Primer\\_for\\_Testing\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/docs/public-policy-accountability-assessment/Assessments/09-10_Primer_for_Testing_FINAL.pdf)

Other useful information about state and local assessments, as well as links

to instructional resources, can be accessed at the WCSD Assessment and Instruction Resources page: <http://www.washoe.k12.nv.us/district/departments/public-policy-accountability-assessment/assessment>

For CRT instructional materials (including sample CRT items for each grade level), test item specifications, and the 2009-2010 CRT matrices, click on the 'Criterion Referenced Test (CRT)' link on the WCSD Assessment and Instruction Resources page or go directly to the following address: [http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Assessment\\_CRT.htm](http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Assessment_CRT.htm)

At <http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Assessment.htm> you will find the latest material on Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and the NDE Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on the state assessment system.

Help with writing successful classroom questions in the style of the CRTs and HSPEs can be found at the School Improvement site: <http://www.washoesip.org/>. Click on the 'Math Standards Symposium' or 'ELA Standards Symposium' links for lots of practical help.

Visit the ELA Standards webpage, [http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Standards\\_EnglishLangArts\\_Standards.html](http://nde.doe.nv.gov/Standards_EnglishLangArts_Standards.html), for information on changes coming to reading tests in 2010-2011.

## Know your Nevada and WCSD Assessments

The following list may be helpful in teachers' establishing a clear and complete picture of the assessments used in Washoe County. Where teacher and student participation is required, the assessment is labeled 'Non-Negotiable.'

**Classroom Assessment (K-12):** Instructionally embedded assessment used formatively as learning unfolds to differentiate instruction, adapt instruction, and to increase student engagement in the learning process.

**Kindergarten Portfolio (WCSD Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based assessment designed to show a balanced representation of student growth (academic, social, emotional) during the

school year and to effectively communicate the data to the student, parents and teachers.

**Curriculum Based Measurements (K-12; WCSD Non-Negotiable):** Basic skills assessment and general outcome measure that uses either or both national and local norms as referents for score interpretation. Provides information pertaining to a student's standing against a norm groups at a particular point in time and can be used to chart developmental progress relative to the norm group over time.

**Qualitative Spelling Inventory (QSI - 1-6; WCSD Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based reading and spelling assessment. Provides a partial picture of a student's reading and spelling skills. Yields information that helps teachers determine how students are performing relative to grade level expectations.

**Informal Reading Inventory (IRI - 1 & 2, WCSD Non-Negotiable; Alternative to Reading Benchmark Assessment for below-grade-level students, 3 - 6):** Standards-based reading assessment. This instrument is used for all 1st and 2nd grade students and 3rd through 6th grade students reading below grade level as measured by QSI. It provides more granular data for determining the decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills of individual readers. Data can be used to monitor student growth and plan instruction.

**District Benchmark Assessments in Reading (3-8; WCSD Non-Negotiable) and Math (1-8; WCSD Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based assessments in reading and math that are designed to measure student achievement relative to the Nevada standards. Results can be used to inform instruction, encourage learning, and monitor performance, and to identify students that require intervention. Reading Benchmark Assessments are used for all 7th and 8th grade students and 3rd through 6th grade students reading at and above grade level as measured by QSI.

*...continued on page 3*

# NOTIFICATION: Sick Leave Bank Guidelines Have Been Updated!

Elaine Lancaster / Executive Director

Beginning January 1 2010, the WEA Sick Leave Bank will have new guidelines for the operation and granting of days from the sick leave bank. Article 20, of the negotiated agreement, sets forth the general functioning of the sick leave bank, but leaves the guidelines up to the WEA. A sub committee of the WEA Board of Directors worked along with WEA staff and our law firm to write the new guidelines. The major change in the guidelines is section 6, which defines “long term illness or disability.” The following is section 6 of the new guidelines:

“For the purpose of this procedure, ‘long term illness or disability’ shall refer to illnesses that are catastrophic or chronic in nature. Chronic illnesses

shall include persistent and lasting conditions that persist for a long time, usually more than three months, including problems which cannot be solved in a short time, or which will recur regardless of action. Catastrophic illnesses shall include only those illnesses or injuries which are calamitous in nature, constituting a great misfortune. Examples of catastrophic diagnoses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Accident resulting in multiple fractures or amputation of a limb
- AIDS
- ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis)
- Cancer
- Cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy
- Condition causing paralysis
- Hemophilia
- Mental illness (requiring hospitalization)

- Rare Disease
- Severe burn involving over 20% of the body
- Severe head injury requiring hospitalization
- Spinal cord injury
- Stroke or cerebrovascular accident
- Elective surgeries are not considered severe conditions except when life-threatening complications arise from them

There is a poster in your faculty room with the complete set of guidelines. Your WEA Rep also has a copy of the guidelines that you may review. You can also download the Sick Leave Bank Guidelines from the “helpful resources” section of our website: [www.weatoday.org](http://www.weatoday.org).

Please contact the WEA office with any questions or concerns.

*...continued from “Assessment Update”*

**Math Finals (Algebra 1-2, 2009-2010; WCS D Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based end of course assessments in mathematics that are designed to measure student achievement relative to the Nevada standards. Results can be used to inform instruction.

**Criterion Referenced Tests (3 – 8; Nevada Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based assessments in reading, math and science. Based on a sampling of Nevada standards, the CRTs measure student achievement after learning has been expected to occur.

**Analytic Trait Writing Assessment (5 & 8; Nevada Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based writing assessment. Based on a sampling of Nevada standards, measures student achievement in writing with respect to multiple writing traits after learning has been expected to occur.

**High School Proficiency Examinations (HSPE - 10+++; Nevada Non-Negotiable):** Standards-based assessments in reading, writing, math and science. Based on sampling of

Nevada standards, the HSPEs measure student achievement after learning has been expected to occur. Students are required to pass all four examinations in order to earn a standard Nevada high school diploma.

**English Language Proficiency Exam (ELPA – K – 12; Nevada Non-Negotiable for all eligible students):** Language acquisition assessment used to monitor student progress.

**Nevada Alternative Assessment (NAA – 3-8, 10+++; Nevada Non-Negotiable for all eligible students):** Alternative to the CRTs and HSPEs in the areas of reading, writing, math and science for severely cognitively disabled students.

For questions about state and local assessments, contact Paul Richter, Director of Assessment, at 348-0323 or [prichter@washoe.k12.nv.us](mailto:prichter@washoe.k12.nv.us), or Sandi Foster, Assessment Coordinator, at 348-0283 or [skfoster@washoe.k12.nv.us](mailto:skfoster@washoe.k12.nv.us). For questions about, or help with, the WCS D data management system, email the Edusoft team at [EdusoftTraining@washoe.k12.nv.us](mailto:EdusoftTraining@washoe.k12.nv.us). ■

*....continued from President’s Article*

have approved on to the NSEA Board, which then finalizes the endorsements. At that point the candidates are notified.

As you can probably tell, the upcoming season is going to be very active. There will be many debates by these candidates that should be of great interest to all educators in and out of the classroom. Certainly public school funding, educator accountability, and economy of the state will be issues we all need to pay close attention to in the coming elections. Remember that the primary elections come early this year, June 8th. When it comes time to vote, be sure to do so, in both primary and general elections. Be involved, ask questions of the candidates, volunteer for phone banks, write postcards and letters, walk for candidates, and put signs in your yard. All of these activities make a difference, influence likely voters, and put friends of education into office. That is our goal. ■



# Contract Corner: Personal Leave and Personal Business Leave

*Chuck Fletcher / UniServ Director*

Sometimes you just need a day to take care of personal “stuff.” Personal Leave and Personal Business Leave are for this very purpose – but what’s the difference between the two? And what needs to be done?

**Personal Leave** shall be granted for two days each school year. One is granted unencumbered, and the second is deducted from accumulated sick leave. **Personal Business Leave** is granted for up to three days each school year, two days deducted from accumulated sick leave and the third with a substitute’s pay deduction.

What is the “reasonable notification” that the contract mentions? Basically this means that the district wants to know as soon as possible so that any necessary arrangements can be made.

And don’t forget to call AESOP for a substitute.

## **Do I have to tell my supervisor why I want the leave?**

For Personal Leave you do not have to provide any explanation – it is “personal.” For Personal Business Leave, you do need to provide the general nature of the business to support that it cannot be done outside of school hours or that it will “not reflect adversely on the District.” The principal cannot deny either of these leaves as long as the request meets the guidelines.

For both Personal Leave and Personal Business Leave, “this leave shall not be granted during the first and last weeks of school unless approved by the principal/supervisor.” However, if the leave is to be used during the last week of school and you are enrolled in a class to be used for professional

growth, then it will be accepted.

The other limitation for Personal Leave is that no more than 15% of a school’s staff (or the District-wide nursing staff) can use the same day – another reason to notify as soon as possible.

These days do not accumulate from one year to the next if unused. So, let’s recap: one day “free” – three days deducted from accumulated sick leave – one day with substitute pay deduction. Two days are “personal” – no reason need be given; three days are for “business” – requested because it can’t be taken care of outside of school.

The language for these leaves is in our contract which can be found on both the WEA website and the WCSD website. Personal Business Leave is article 21.6, and Personal Leave is 21.8.

Questions? Call 828-3022!

# Nurse’s Notes: Disaster Preparedness

*Margi Battin / WCSD School Nurse*

Where will you be when disaster strikes: at the office, in the car, on vacation or at home? Take a moment to fully appreciate the immensity of the scenario. Are you prepared?

Every disaster - both man-made and natural - provides its own set of problems, but one thing is constant: you will need to take action to protect yourself, your co-workers, your students and your family. So ask yourself:

- Do you know the WCSD Emergency Procedures?
- What disaster preparations have you done for yourself and your family?
- Have you considered that you may be all alone to provide for yourself after a disaster?

Emergency response personnel and their equipment and supplies may not be available, and no one can be promised a timely rescue during or after a major disaster. This means having your own food, water and other emergency rescue supplies in sufficient quantity to

last for at least three days – but seven days is more realistic. Being prepared, and thinking clearly will make all the difference in an emergency.

## **There are four basic steps for disaster or emergency preparedness:**

### **1. Know what disasters could occur in your area and how to respond.**

Review WCSD Emergency Procedures. Know the local evacuation sites, emergency supply points and evacuation routes before the disaster occurs.

### **2. Become familiar and follow the WCSD Emergency Plan, and create your own personal emergency plan.**

Ensure pertinent family members have a copy of all appropriate emergency plans. Talk to your co-workers and family members about disasters/emergencies that could happen in your area. Understand how to respond to each of them. Have an alternate meeting place in the event your work place and/or home cannot be accessed. Arrange for an out-of-town relative or friend to serve as your contact person for every family member to call or email. Choose

a person who doesn’t live nearby, in case local phone service is down. In an emergency everyone should know to contact that person right away. Remember to include an emergency plan for your pet(s).

**3. Put together an emergency kit(s) for work, travel and home.** The kit should include water, food, emergency tools, emergency communication items, hygiene supplies, first aid supplies, clothing, possible bedding, prescription medications and money. Have a plan as to where you will keep all your important personal and family documents. These papers are difficult or impossible to replace and may be needed during the disaster.

**4. Practice and update your emergency plan.** Once you have developed your plan you should conduct drills, test evacuation routes, and practice calling your emergency contact and meeting at your evacuation site. This would also include reviewing/practicing the WCSD Emergency Plans.

....continued on page 5

## New benefits, lower fees rolling out at Clearstar Financial Integration with United Federal Credit Union brings enhanced accounts and rates

Clearstar Financial Credit Union is now part of United Federal Credit Union, and new benefits for members have started to arrive. Here are six of the best:

### 1. Bible Way Branch to Return

A favorite branch of many members, this location will be reopening in 2010.

### 2. Interest Plus Checking

Beginning December 1, 2009, Reward Checking will become Interest Plus Checking. The rate has gone up (visit [clearstarfcu.com](http://clearstarfcu.com) to check it out), and the number of required debit card transactions has been reduced to ten. Remember, eligible transactions must be signature rather than PIN-based.

### 3. Eliminated & Reduced Fees

In early October, the credit union eliminated the \$5 membership fee, the \$5 loan application fee, and the \$25 loan processing fee. Plus, the par value of one share was reduced to \$5, meaning the member needs to keep just \$5 in his or her savings account to remain a member (reduced from \$25). Now, it costs less to join and take advantage of the membership in your credit union.

### 4. Auto Loans

With reduced fees and great rates, now is the time to apply for an auto loan at Clearstar Financial.

### 5. Commitment to education

The Clearstar Financial educational branch at the Academy of Arts, Careers, & Technology will be opening in January 2010. Located on Edison Way, this location will be open to the public and will provide job experience for students interested in banking and business careers.

### 6. Increased Deposit Insurance

Share insurance at the credit union has doubled, to a total of at least \$500,000 per member; a combination of \$250,000 provided by the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), a U.S. federal government agency, and \$250,000 by Excess Share Insurance (ESI), a private deposit insurance company.

### About the United Federal Credit Union acquisition and upcoming name change

On September 25, 2009 Clearstar Financial Credit Union increased its strength and member benefits when it was acquired by United Federal Credit Union. The acquisition is a win-win situation for Clearstar Financial and United FCU. Clearstar members will gain access to the United Difference, providing members with best-of-industry products and services in all categories. The credit union now has assets of \$1.1 billion and the resources to serve you well, despite the economic downturn.

Beginning on January 1, 2010, the United FCU name will begin to replace Clearstar Financial on branches, documents, and the website. All deposits, debit cards, checks, ATMs, and online banking services will continue as usual, although some members may eventually receive new cards or checks.

*Questions?* Call us at 329-6673. We're happy to help.

Partnering with Members - Sharing the Benefits



**clearstar**<sup>SM</sup>

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....continued from "Nurse's Notes"

This article briefly touches upon disaster awareness and the need for preparation. Preparation is NOT about instilling fear - it is about being ready!!!

I hope this becomes your first step in formulating your own personal emergency plan and inspires you to review, once again, the WCDSD emergency procedures. Disaster awareness has the

power to prevent helplessness and increase survival when unexpected disaster strikes.

## Truth or Consequences

*Deb Garrett / Membership Committee*

November is the time most of us are thinking about report cards, Thanksgiving, pre-holiday shopping, and, oftentimes, elections. This time of year is a perfect opportunity to address the misconception that the NEA is committed to electing only Democrats to public office. In truth, the NEA recommends that its members support pro-education candidates without regard to their political affiliation. The NEA has, in fact, recommended candidates who are Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. The NEA's recommendation is based on how the candidates within each party have supported issues that are important to NEA members and students. The issues that NEA supports include opposing private school vouchers, respecting teachers as professionals, and supporting quality education programs. A candidate's political party

is never a consideration when making recommendations. When a candidate embraces the issues which the NEA also supports, the NEA then recommends the support of that candidate, regardless of political affiliation.

## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Theresa Amos  
Hug High

Julie Cousins  
Hug High

Mallory Foley  
Hug High

Shannon Longfield  
Lincoln Park Elementary

Megan McGuinness  
Natchez Elementary

Jodie Messina  
Warner Elementary

Jamie Peterson  
Taylor Elementary

Courtney Sego  
Drake Elementary

Brandi Shivers  
Hug High

Adrienne Turner  
Cold Springs Middle

Victoria Wellman  
Sparks Middle

Rita Whitaker-Haun  
Incline Elementary

## SKI TICKET DISCOUNTS AT WEA

We've got discount ski tickets for WEA members again this winter! Plan on stopping by the WEA Office (we're open 8:30 to 4:30 Monday through Friday) to purchase discounted tickets for your favorite ski resort. Tickets can be purchased with cash or check. And remember, we're closed for winter break, so if you're planning on skiing during your time off, stop by before December 18th to pick up your tickets!

All discount prices are for **one full day lift ticket**:

### Mt. Rose

Adult (age 18-64): \$50

Teen (age 13-17): \$45 / Child (age 6-12): \$17

Senior (age 65-74): \$37 / Super Senior (age 75+): \$17

### Northstar

Adult (age 23-64): \$62

Young Adult (age 13-22) : \$54

Child (age 5-12): \$19

### Kirkwood

Adult (age 18+): \$58

Junior (age 13-18): \$47

### Squaw Valley

Adult: \$62



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Printed by Registered Ink

Registered Ink is a  
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WEA Today is published nine times per year to inform, educate and entertain the members of Washoe Education Association. We urge readers to write letters to the editor on matters of concern. Letters should be mailed to WEA Today Editor at 1890 Donald Street, Reno, NV. 89502. All letters must be signed and include phone number; however, anonymity will be granted if deemed necessary. We reserve the right to edit for length or libelous comments. It would be appreciated if letters were typed, but neatly handwritten copies are accepted.