



# WEA TODAY

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November 2008 Issue

## Washoe Education Association Monthly Newsletter

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### Mark Your Calendar

#### November 11th

Veterans Day - Schools Closed

#### November 16th

American Education Week

#### November 27th & 28th

Thanksgiving/Family Holiday  
Schools Closed

#### December 3rd

Rep Council

Nominations Open for a seat on  
the NSEA Board of Directors

#### December 11th

Nominations Close



## Discount Ski Tickets

Available in the

## WEA Office...!

See page 6 for pricing details

## Work Continues in D.C.

*Ken Buhrmann / WEA President*

No one can say we don't live in exciting, interesting times. News of the economy and politics changes by the day and by the hour, and meanwhile, questions concerning issues that have been around even longer are not going away. Government Pension Offset/Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP), plus the new IRS rulings on employee pensions keep many individuals looking for answers.

Last month in Washington D.C., I met with the NEA GPO/WEP committee and task force of which I am a member. The 110th Congress has adjourned without taking any action on the repeal of GPO/WEP. However, the outlook for some action on this important repeal is more positive with the new and upcoming 111th Congress. With a change in administration, at least part of the repeal of GPO/WEP is very possible. Already Senator Diane Feinstein and Representative Burman have the new bills for repeal ready to be introduced in the both houses of the new congress. At this time there are 352 House members signed on as well as 38 in the Senate - needing only 22 more to sign on in the Senate for it to be veto-proof. NEA has been in contact with Senators McCain and Obama asking for their support on this important issue. Senator McCain has refused, but Senators Obama and Biden have signed on for the repeal of GPO/WEP.

At the last Representative Assembly in Washington D.C., your NEA Directors, Tom Wellman and I, were successful in passing New Business Item #10. This set aside in the NEA budget \$75,000 for a fact-finding team specifically designed to gather hard facts and figures on how this unfair GPO/WEP

penalty negatively affects us and our colleagues in education. NBI #10 also directs money and efforts to educate the public via media on how this social security penalty is unfair and needs to be repealed. I will keep you informed as our efforts progress.

Next, your PERS retirement fund is healthy and stable. I know by the number of phone calls that the negative economic news has people concerned about the solvency of PERS and the security of their retirement funds. Right now all is well and stable with PERS. It is well-handled and wisely managed by its Board of Directors. Very little was invested in the stock market; therefore, the investment loss was minimal. It is currently \$8 billion strong and stable.

Finally, I know many of you have heard of a bill introduced by Representative Sam Johnson from Texas, passed by Congress, and signed by the President. This bill was originally directed to "private" pension plans. However, the IRS interpretation was different and felt it directly affected all pension funds both private and public. It affected employee pensions by changing the way public employees were to be taxed. More specifically, the IRS was demanding a certain age requirement to retire. Instead of "years of service" as is in our current law here in Nevada, the IRS was going to heavily penalize individuals who retired before the age of 62, no matter the years of service they had. This bill was to go into effect at the beginning of 2010.

**NOW THE GOOD NEWS!** The NEA and your NEA Directors and NSEA leadership heavily lobbied your Congressional delegation, who immediately wrote letters to the IRS and made phone calls. By the time we left

*Continued... page 2...*

# WEA Has Input on District Committees

*Elaine Lancaster/Executive Director*

Should you ever think that the WEA is not represented on district committees, let me assure you we're always at the table. Currently we are serving on the Superintendent's Advisory Committee for Schools in Restructuring, the District Improvement Plan, the Budget Technical Task Force and a sub-committee for National Board Certification. We also have a majority of members on the 6-12 math adoption committee.

The Restructuring Committee will begin meeting on Oct 29th. The purpose of the committee is to offer assistance, help our schools who are in year 4 in need of improvement find ways to accomplish their goals, and to advise the Superintendent on the plans for each school. Our first meeting will be directed toward the history of the schools involved and the application requirements. Each school involved has a restructuring team in place and is working on their plan. The committee will meet 2 more times to consider the applications and then recommend the plans to the Superintendent. It is extremely important that the WEA be at these meetings because the plans could include items outside the negotiated agreement. Per our current agreement, those items would need to

## **Work Continues in D.C.**

*Continued from pg. 1*

D.C., we were informed that the IRS had agreed to put any further movement on this issue on "indefinite hold." IRS agreed that much more discussion and further interpretation of the law was needed before changes were to be made and the earliest that this could occur was 2011. We will be monitoring this very closely as time goes on.

The NEA, your NSEA leadership, and your NEA Directors should be congratulated on the successful representation of this issue to the IRS on behalf of its members and all public employees. If you have any questions or would like to have more information, please feel free to contact me via e-mail or by phone (828-3023).

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be brought to the negotiations table. Serving with me on this committee are Fran McGregor from Shaw MS and Laurie Johns from Smithridge.

The District Improvement Plan committee is a requirement of the state. Each district must identify priority needs (goals) for improvement, causes (factors), and solutions (strategies). Under NRS 385 the plan must include:

*\*scientifically based research strategies and materials to strengthen core subjects*

*\*Strategies to promote effective parental involvement*

*\*Programs of remedial education or tutoring*

*\*Strategies to improve academic achievement*

We will meet until mid November, when the plan must be finalized to send to the state.

The National Board Certification sub committee was established in the negotiated agreement and will have 4 WEA members and 4 district personnel members. The committee is charged with reviewing the criteria of the requirements necessary to achieve National certification. This provides an equal opportunity for all licensed staff to have access to the certification process.

The Budget Technical Task Force was referenced in last month's WEA Today. We have not met since then.

Often the district will ask us for names of folks who would be willing to serve on various committees. Please consider serving when your reps send out the message.

## Deception 13: NEA is Against the Use of Phonics

*Bonnie Gossett*

When I was being trained as both a high school teacher and later as a speech/language pathologist, the single largest truth I learned was that one size does not fit all. Every child learns slightly and sometimes completely differently. That fact is one of the reasons I love my job; because each child is a mystery. I must follow the clues to best determine what's going to help that child to learn and develop. As educators we need balance and some freedom to discover what our students' needs are.

It is important to consider scientific research when making decisions about curriculum and instruction. The NEA

is aware how well trained our educators are. Many of our teachers are reading specialists and are very capable of determining what our students need and then helping them to become proficient readers. As an Association we are concerned that government approved programs, such as Reading First and Early Reading First, are too highly scripted and put too much emphasis on phonics, taking too much decision making about the student away from the highly trained teacher. As educators we didn't spend all those years in school, and in all those trainings since, filling our bags with tricks, so that we could best teach every child, just to have our bag taken away and our judgment ignored.

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\*Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

# Contract Corner: *Sick Leave at Separation and ESIP*

*Chuck Fletcher / UniServ Director*

Separation, you ask? In the case of your accumulated sick leave, if you have 10 years of service, are retiring or resigning, you are entitled to payment for unused sick leave days. In the case of the Early Separation Incentive Plan (ESIP), if you plan to retire or separate early, the district will pay you up to 30% of your final year's salary.

## Payment for Accumulated Sick Leave

Assuming you have 10 years of continuous service, you can be paid for 25% of accumulated sick leave (maximum of 190 days) at your daily rate of pay. There is a cap on the total amount paid out district-wide per year as a percentage of the general fund.

One small caveat: if you separate from Washoe County to take a job at another

school district in Nevada, you are entitled to take your accumulated sick leave with you – but you can't "have your sick leave and get paid for it, too!"

## Early Separation Incentive Plan (ESIP)

Do you have at least 20 years of continuous service with the District? Are you 50 years old? Were you hired prior to July 1, 1985 and have up to 36 years of service? Were you hired on or after the above date, and have up to 30 years of service? You are eligible for ESIP!

Don't take retirement lightly in these economic times, but if you have planned and are ready, then ESIP could well be for you. You must submit an ESIP application (available in November and due by Winter Break) and a Letter of Resignation (effective before September

1st) to Human Resources. The maximum incentive is 30% of your final year's salary (not to exceed 30% of column TG Step 20), there is a district-wide cap set at \$1,038,000. If the number of employees and their calculated payment exceeds the cap, the benefit will be distributed to employees with the greatest number of years of continuous service to the District. **The benefit is taxable by the IRS.** You can use the money to buy years of service in PERS (up to 5), or it will be paid to you in a lump sum at the end of your contract year.

Should you die before the ESIP money is paid out, the balance will go to your estate.

For more information, see article 24.14 the negotiated agreement, or come and ask us!

# Counselor's Connection

## *Healthy Bodies Are One Foundation For School Success*

*Sherry L. Sanders / School Counselor*

The suggestions in this article are basic common sense. As a marriage/family therapist and an elementary school counselor, I have seen that too many individuals and families are often too hurried to take care of their basic health. A sound body improves resistance to infections, ability to concentrate and overall mental performance. It also reduces stress and builds energy to ensure that we get through high stress days. When the body is healthy, there is a better chance of being emotionally strong as well as mentally adept.

Use the checklist on how you are doing and what needs to be changed so your children can achieve a healthy body and perform better in school. When family members practice healthy habits, the student will do better.

**EATING HABITS** – Does your child eat at least three meals a day? What about a balanced diet? Limit the family to 1 or 2 fast food meals a week. Try to eat dinners as a family, even if that means a 15 minute overlap or catching everyone between activities. Research shows that family meals increase children's ability

to express ideas, use higher thinking skills, develop good social skills and build familial relationships.

**EXERCISE** – Are you and your family doing sustained activity that gets the heart rate up and keeps it there a minimum of 20 minutes, 3 – 4 times a week? This does not have to be at a gym. A brisk walk in the neighborhood, sports or in-home calisthenics can do the trick.

**SLEEP** – The average adult needs 6 - 8 hours; a child needs from 8 – 10. Parents may need to tighten down on bedtime as many children and teens will resist. Stay firm during the week and let them **EARN** extra time on the weekends. Do something relaxing before bed: a warm bath, reading, a light, high protein snack and warm milk or cocoa. Young children really like a predictable routine to settle them in. Plenty of sleep helps them do better in school.

**TECHNOLOGY (TV/MOVIES/VIDEO GAMES/ CELL PHONES)** – Minimize the amount of time your child spends on these activities during the week. Save them as rewards, watching quality, educational shows during the week, allowing limited free choice on the weekends. Both TV and videos act as surrogate role models

and can actually have a greater effect than parents on value building. Avoid violent and corrupt TV, movies and games. We are seeing in the schools that even very young children and many of our very brightest are learning to solve conflicts violently. Students are also day-dreaming about the games they play or are experiencing on-going, disruptive fear about horrible things they see. There is no need for children to bring video games and other toys and cell phones to school. They are distracting to the student and class and carry the message that they are needed for entertainment – a dependency that does more harm than good. If cell phones are brought, they should remain in back packs and be used only for an emergency.

**BACK PACKS** – I see students at school daily who are over-burdened with the contents of their backpacks. A certain amount of weight will build strong backs. Too much will cause present and future physical problems. The parent and teacher can help by having the child go through the back pack identify those things actually needed in school or at home to do their work. Some students carry ALL of their books when they may only need one or two that day.

# Public Policy, Accountability & Assessment

*Paul Richter / Director of Assessment*

Assessments of all kinds are an integral part of educational processes, from the central educational unit, the classroom, on up to the State Department of Education. It is important for teachers to fully understand the purposes of each assessment they administer and to fully understand what is expected of them during, and after, the administration of those assessments.

This article features two key sections of the WCSD Primer for Testing and presents them for emphasis in an effort to best inform teachers concerning appropriate practices during the administration of assessments. The goal of PPA&A is that administration of assessments mandated by either the WCSD Board of Trustees or the Nevada Legislature goes smoothly and with a minimum of difficulty and lost instructional time for teachers.

If you have any questions about any aspects of these excerpts, or about assessment in general, please email Paul Richter, Director of Assessment, at [prichter@washoe.k12.nv.us](mailto:prichter@washoe.k12.nv.us)

*From Page 7 of the WCSD Primer for Testing:* “District-produced examinations (Benchmark Assessments, CRTs, High School Math Finals, and CBEs) may vary significantly in rules and procedures from State tests. Administrators and staff must carefully read all resources that accompany these tests. If there is a question about proper procedure, please contact PPA&A before proceeding.

**Benchmark Assessments:** Though generally administered at the end of instructional periods, the WCSD Benchmark Assessments are not, by Board of Trustees Mandate, summative assessments. They are, instead, to be used to inform instruction, encourage learning, and enhance student achievement. State standards and accountability assessments provide clear targets, common benchmark assessments measure progress towards those targets, and continuous classroom assessment provides day-to-day feedback. All three assessment measures work together to provide a complete picture of student achievement. Assessment for learning promotes the WCSD vision of students reaching their full potential.

WCSD Benchmark Assessments are semi-secure. This means that teachers have access to them, but students do not, prior to scheduled testing. There is no requirement to lock benchmark assessment test booklets in the school’s locked testing cabinet. Teachers should have ready access to the books in their classrooms and should review them to assist in implementing the instructional pacing outlined for a subject. However, students should not be given access to the books prior to scheduled testing, nor should the items on the tests be taught to students prior to scheduled testing. After test administration, teachers are encouraged to use the test books to review items, student responses and item analyses generated by Edusoft with their students to help guide instruction and to increase the level of student involvement and buy-in to their learning.

Summative Assessments in Math, Grades 1 and 2; 9 through 12 and CBEs: The summative math CRTs in grades 1 and 2, the Common Math Finals in high school, and the Credit by Exam opportunities afforded middle school students on-site in the world languages and Algebra 1-2 are all secure test administrations. This means that the kinds of security measures followed with state assessments must be employed unless specific procedures or rules in the related administration guidelines indicate otherwise. Again, administrators, test coordinators and teachers must read the related test administrations guidelines completely and carefully prior to the administration of these assessments.”

Finally, following is a test security checklist that can also be found in your WCSD Primer for Testing. While it doesn’t cover every aspect of test security, following this set of reminders will protect you from making mistakes.

## IMPORTANT SECURITY REMINDERS FOR TEST ADMINISTRATORS

High Schools: Verify the eligibility and identity of **EACH** student who is testing—determine credit sufficiency prior to the testing session.

Use a sign-in sheet with a column to log the test booklet numbers assigned to each student.

Provide an answer document for every eligible student enrolled during testing.

Use **ONLY ONE ANSWER SHEET PER STUDENT** — students testing in different subjects on different days are to use the same answer sheet.

No personal belongings are permitted on the desk surface. Whenever practicable, have students store back packs and other personal belongings in the rear of the testing room.

Follow the script in the Test Administration Manual **VERBATIM**.

Provide accommodations as outlined in the students’ IEP, 504 or LEP testing accommodation plans. Students must not be provided accommodations to which they are not entitled.

Students must **NOT** be left unattended or alone with unlicensed personnel or test materials.

**Walk the room** — actively monitor students during testing; observe that students are bubbling responses in the correct subject section of the answer document.

Electronic communication and imaging devices, portable media players, and hand-held computers (e.g. cell phones, pagers, cameras, hand-held scanners, iPods, PDAs) are strictly prohibited.

Provide additional time in a test-conducive environment—follow the school’s plan for orderly transition from one testing situation to another. Students must **NOT** be left unsupervised during the transition and may not interact with peers prior to completing a part or session.

**DISCLOSURE OF TEST CONTENT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED BY STATE LAW** — do not read, review, copy, reproduce or take notes on test items.

Students may **NOT** receive assistance with test items.

Test items may **NOT** be translated into another language.

Collect and log in all materials—test booklets, writing prompts, HSPE formula sheets, scratch paper, pencils, etc. Students are to leave the room with only their personal belongings.

Check test booklets for answer sheets tucked inside.

Ensure that the number of test booklets (or prompts) and answer sheets returned is identical to the quantities that were distributed prior to testing. (30 students = 30 tests + 30 answer documents)

Report irregularities **IMMEDIATELY** to your School Test Coordinator or Principal.

# Nurse's Notes...

Sharon G. Freier / RN

## Mental Health Parity Signed Into Law; Bill Broadly Outlaws Health Insurance Discrimination - Recognizes Importance of Mental Health to Overall Health

Mental Health America today hailed as "a great civil rights victory" the approval of a mental health parity legislation that will broadly outlaw health insurance discrimination against Americans with mental health and substance-use conditions in employer-sponsored health plans. The legislation, which recognizes the importance of mental health to overall health, bans employers and insurers from imposing stricter limits on coverage for mental health and substance-use conditions than those set for other health problems. It will provide parity for 82 million Americans covered by self-insured plans and another 31 million in plans that are subject to state regulation. It is estimated that roughly 67 percent of adults and 80 percent of children requiring mental health services do not receive help. For fact sheets on the legislation and more information: [http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/site/PageServer?pagename=Equity\\_Campaign&JServSessionIdr001=2jvngse8h6.app6b](http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/site/PageServer?pagename=Equity_Campaign&JServSessionIdr001=2jvngse8h6.app6b).

## One in Four U.S. Teen Girls Got Cervical Cancer Shot - By Mike Stobbe

About one in four teen girls last year got the groundbreaking vaccine that prevents cervical cancer, federal health officials reported Thursday. The figures represent the government's first full year of vaccination rate data for the Gardasil vaccine, which came on the market in mid-2006. Merck & Co.'s heavily advertised, three shot series targets the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus. To read: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081009/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/med\\_teen\\_vaccinations](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081009/ap_on_he_me/med_teen_vaccinations). Copyright 2008, The Associated Press

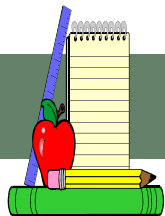
## Jump Seen In Staph-Linked Flu Deaths in Kids - By Lindsey Tanner

More children have died from flu because they also had staph infections, according to a new government report that urges parents to have their kids get the flu shot. The number of deaths wasn't high - 73 during the 2006-2007 flu season - but there was more

than a fivefold increase in hard-to-treat complications. And preliminary figures indicate deaths rose again during this past winter's flu season. To read: [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081006/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/med\\_children\\_s\\_flu\\_deaths](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20081006/ap_on_he_me/med_children_s_flu_deaths). Copyright 2008, The Associated Press

## Doctors: No Hamsters or Exotic Pets For Young Kids - By Lindsey Tanner

Warning: Young children should not keep hedgehogs as pets - or hamsters, baby chicks, lizards and turtles, for that matter - because of risks for disease. That's according to the nation's leading pediatricians' group in a new report about dangers from exotic animals. Besides evidence that they can carry dangerous and sometimes potentially deadly germs, exotic pets may be more prone than cats and dogs to bite, scratch or claw - putting children younger than five particularly at risk, the report says. To read: [http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5ha3U4JlgnDXYw7PiAzCGj\\_Gsvt0QD93KOVE00](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5ha3U4JlgnDXYw7PiAzCGj_Gsvt0QD93KOVE00). Copyright 2008, The Associated Press



## THE EDUCATOR'S TOOLBOX

By: Laurie Johns

I spent some time this month looking around for middle school teacher sites. I found two places you could go as a start. The first is [www.eastchester.k12.ny.us/schools/ms/kids/kids.html](http://www.eastchester.k12.ny.us/schools/ms/kids/kids.html)

This site was created by teachers at Eastchester Middle School in New York. It contains links to other information and sites from that one main site. Topics include the arts, computers and technology, English, health, math, science, social studies, sports, town, country and state (relative to NY), fun and entertainment. There were many subgroups within each topic area.

The second site I found was [www.middleweb.com/10teachingsites.html](http://www.middleweb.com/10teachingsites.html). This site listed 10 great websites for

middle school teachers. Some of these sites you may know and be familiar with already; some you may not. The site provides a direct link to each of the following ten sites:

1. Teacher to Teacher lesson resources
2. GEM – The Gateway to 21ST Century Skills
3. Edutopia – George Lucas Educational Foundation
4. Education World
5. PBS Teacher Source
6. DiscoverySchool.com for teachers
7. Marco Polo and Thinkfinity
8. The Annenberg Teachers' Lab
9. Meaningful Teacher
10. Microsoft Education Community.

This edition is short but sweet. I hope that middle school teachers get a chance to get on line, look around, and try these things out as well as find them helpful.

Attention Teachers at all grade levels within the district: I need your assistance! If you have a website you love, use a lot, can't live without - PLEASE tell me about it so I can share it with all of WEA. Send it to Laurie Johns at [2schues@gmail.com](mailto:2schues@gmail.com). In the subject heading area write "educator's tool box" so I know what's coming my way. Also, be sure to include your name and school so I can give the credit for the find! Until next time, happy web surfing!

# WEA Office Hours: 8:30 to 4:30

Are you planning on dropping by the WEA office to pick up movie passes or ski tickets? Remember that our office hours are 8:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday. Feel free to come during lunch hours – there will be somebody in the building all day until 4:30pm who can sell you tickets. If you arrive after 4:30, please do not disturb other

workers in the building. They do not work for the WEA and they are not responsible for ticket sales.

Remember, we are closed from December 22nd until January 2nd for the winter holiday, so if you want to spend some vacation time on the slopes or catching a holiday movie at the theater, you must come and pick up tickets by Friday, December 19th

at 4:30 pm! Last year, we had lines out the door on the two days before winter break, and some supplies did run out, so come early in the season to make sure that you have the tickets you need. Stress runs high at the last minute, and if quantities are low the WEA reserves the right to limit the number you can purchase, so give yourself a break from holiday season hassle and come buy tickets before December 19th!

## Ski Tickets at the WEA

Ladies and gentlemen, break out your snow gear because discount ski tickets are here for the 2008-2009 Season!

Resort	WEA Price	Regular Resort Price
Mt. Rose		
Adult Full Day Lift Ticket	\$42.00	\$64.00 (35% savings)
Kirkwood		
Adult Full Day Lift Ticket	\$55.00	to be announced
Junior Full Day Lift Ticket	\$45.00	to be announced
Northstar		
Adult Full Day Lift Ticket	\$58.00*	\$74.00
Young Adult Full Day Lift Ticket	\$52.00*	\$64.00
Child Full Day Lift Ticket	\$17.00*	\$28.00
Squaw Valley		
Adult Full Day Lift Ticket	\$61.00	to be announced

\* These prices are subject to a \$2-\$4 increase after initial quantity runs out. This is a restriction imposed by Northstar, not by the WEA. Call 828-9282 for current pricing.

When you come by our office to purchase these tickets, please remember to bring your check book or swing by the ATM on your way, as we cannot accept debit or credit cards. And remember, buying tickets is risk-free: you can bring them back to the WEA for a full refund until May 1st, 2009.

## Welcome New Members

Jennifer Lee	Peavine	Stefanie Brannan	Lincoln Park
Alicia Mustard	Wooster	Michael Pointer	Spanish Springs HS
Lisa Johnson	Wooster	Mitchell Knobbe	Pine
Stephanie Segal	Lemmon Valley	Paul Schum	Allen
Daniel Carlstrom	Shaw	Sarah Anderson	Drake
Alison Butler	Child Find/Mill Street	Kariann Lattin	Dodson
Stacy Humphreys	Lemmon Valley	Kathleen Stylen	Reed H.S.
Erin Beaver	Sun Valley	Gillian Bartlett	Van Gorder
Melissa Francis	Moss	John Mendicino	Lincoln Park
Adrienne Goff	Wooster		



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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.

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