



# Action Line

Vancouver Education Association

March 2021



## Navigating the Return to Hybrid

We all are feeling like we are caught in the COVID-19 labyrinth. Throughout all the twists and turns and unexpected roadblocks, VEA has been working tirelessly helping to navigate the return to hybrid and address the workload and safety concerns of our membership.

### Member Voice

Nearly 900 members took the fourth reopening schools survey in early February. The data from this survey has been used to address many concerns voiced by membership. VEA advocacy resulted in correction of safety violations and workload demands at elementary sites. VEA also reiterated that livestreaming should be an option and a stipend was agreed to for those who undertake this form of instruction. The MOU was last updated in early [February](#) with the addition of a \$500 supplemental contract for members who livestream. There have been several [clarifications](#) reached with the district around the stipend protocols.

With the impending return to hybrid for middle school staff, VEA hosted a listening session on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Middle school membership reiterated the need to mitigate safety concerns. Feedback collected from the MS listening session and VEA response can be [found here](#). While MS polling supported an action at specific sites, data did not indicate similar support district-wide. In addition, any labor action contrary to the MOU could be considered an unfair labor practice. The MOU allows for the return to school operations when the Superintendent deems it safe to do so in consultation with the DOH and CCPH.

### Safety

VEA President Kari Van Nostran and other area school association leaders met with Dr Melnick from CCPH in [November](#) around the return for our Kindergarten staff and again on [February 10<sup>th</sup>](#) clarifying vaccination protocols and advocating for an expedited delivery of vaccines to K-12 staff, challenges to the secondary hybrid models, case reporting, and information on the new COVID-19 variants as well. There was a commitment by CCPH to try to meet more frequently moving forward.

**Educate yourself** VEA members are encouraged to know what can and should happen with regards to safety at your worksite. VEA has posted the following resources as well as more on the VEA website homepage ([www.vancouverea.org](http://www.vancouverea.org)). As new guidance is received, it is updated on this site. Please let VEA know how we can assist and/or support you!

- [Department of Health Tools to prepare for in-person instruction](#)
- 1/25/21 [DOH Updated Guidance](#)
- 1/28/21 [Employer Health and Safety Requirements for School Scenarios](#)

**Labor and Industry Violations** First, contact your COVID coordinator – or have your Safety Committee/VEA representative do so on your behalf – alerting them to the violation. If a sufficient response is not received, contact VEA for assistance with filing a L and I complaint.

- [Addressing Workplace Concerns Guide](#) Follow this WEA guide (see page 2) if you are in an unsafe work situation.
- [L&I Health and Safety Guidance](#) for Schools
- [WEA interpretation of L&I Health and Safety Guidance](#)
- If students who don't qualify for an accommodation refuse to wear masks, it is a safety violation. Let your COVID site coordinator know that this constitutes a L&I violation. WEA has determined that a student who refuses to wear a mask and is subsequently offered remote learning does not violate the exclusion/discipline rules.
- Lack of subs cannot be an "excuse" for putting you in an unsafe environment. Students cannot be added to your classroom if you do not have adequate (6') space to accommodate them. In addition, if you are instructed to teach or "cover" a class during your prep for more than half the week for an extended period of time, VEA will advocate for a supplemental contract on your behalf.

### Elevate your School Safety Committee

- [Worksite Safety Checklist](#) Here's a list that your worksite committee can use to know what is supposed to happen and working together to evoke change as needed.
- Workplace [Safety and Health Hazard Log](#) Keep track of concerns and response timelines. Example violations would be *contrary to* such statements as: A fresh KN95 mask is provided daily by the district; classrooms ensure distancing between students is 6' (The district has committed to edge of desk to edge of desk being 6' apart); cleaning protocol in-between cohorts of students is adequate.

**Speak with a common voice** The School Board is your employer. VEA encourages testimony to the School Board around specific situations that need remediation before kids come back and/or when new situations unfold that are not safe after hybrid has begun. Let VEA know if you would like assistance organizing around school board communications.

## Saving More for Retirement?



Many contribution rate limits were raised in 2020. If you didn't max out your contributions in 2020, you can save more for your future in 2021.

2021 tax-qualified plan contribution limits:

\$ 19,500	403(B), 457(b) and 401(k)
\$6,500	403(b), 457(b) and 401(k) plan catch-up contributions for employees age 50 years or older
\$3,000	403(b) plan special catch-up
\$19,500	457(b) plan special catch-up contributions

Note: You can't use both 457(b) special catch-up provision and the age-based catch-up provision in the same year. However, you can use whichever is greater. Questions? Contact Cassie Johnson, CFP. 360-901-9063 or [cassie.johnson@aig.com](mailto:cassie.johnson@aig.com)  
Consultations are FREE to WEA members!!

## VEA Leadership 21-22

Nominations for VEA Executive Board positions closed at the February Rep Council meeting. All positions were uncontested and therefore per the Standing Rules, were named as elected. Your VEA board taking office on August 1 is...

President, Kari Van Nostran  
 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Lynn Maiorca  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President in Charge of ESA & TOSA Affairs, Johnny Askew  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President in Charge of Member Engagement, Maxwell Merchant  
 4<sup>th</sup> Vice President in Charge of Equity Affairs, Marina Heitz  
 Recording Secretary, Christine Munson  
 Treasurer, Shannon McClelland  
 Primary Trustee, Anne Wiley  
 Intermediate Trustee, Melissa Bergmann  
 Middle School Trustee, Keith Lloyd  
 High School Trustee, Anne Kizerian  
 Special Ed Trustee, Mona Rominger  
 Specialist Educator Trustee, Cam Swarts

## Honoring the Best of the Best



The NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence recognizes, rewards and promotes excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession.

**Eligibility.** All current members of an NEA local affiliate or bargaining unit are eligible, including teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff. Any WEA member is eligible to nominate another WEA member for this award.

**Award criteria.** Nominations must address the candidate's qualifications in five areas: 1) Professional Practice, 2) Advocacy for the Profession, 3) Community Engagement, 4) Leadership in Professional Development, and 5) Attention to Diversity.

**Award recognition.** WEA's nominee will receive expenses-paid travel to the NEA Foundation's Annual Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C. in February 2022.

Five awardees will be selected for *The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence* and receive \$10,000 each, plus expenses-paid travel for themselves and a guest. The *NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence* recipient, selected from the five, receives \$25,000 in cash and a personalized commemorative gift. Read more about the award [here](#).

**Nomination Process:** WEA is accepting nominations for our state affiliate award winner. It's easy to nominate a deserving WEA member! There are just two steps including a nomination letter and a brief response from the nominee. Please contact VEA for more details:

**Do you want to learn more about what's in the VEA contract? Click the link to register!**

**Contract Book Study**, 4:00-5:30 pm

- [March 8<sup>th</sup>](#) (chapters 1-6)
- [March 29<sup>th</sup>](#) (chapters 7-9)
- [May 10<sup>th</sup>](#) (chapter 10)
- [May 24<sup>th</sup>](#) (chapters 11-15 and appendix)

## Are you thinking about summer...?

Certificated Summer positions will be posted by the district in March. To apply, the applicant must be signed-in as an internal employee.



### **WEA-RETIRED SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE**

WEA-Retired is offering up to ten (10) \$1,000 non-renewable scholarships to aid WEA members in enhancing skills in specific education areas and/or attaining or maintaining a teaching certificate. Applicants must be a WEA member to apply.

Application packets are online for your convenience [www.washingtonea.org/retired](http://www.washingtonea.org/retired)

The completed cover sheet, letter of application, and letter of recommendation narrative must be received no later than March 10, 2021 at 51 SE Bayview Lane – Shelton, WA 98584 or via email to Bev (see email above). Questions? Contact Bev Wentz at [barwentz@comcast.net](mailto:barwentz@comcast.net)

## Text VEAINFO to 41411



Are you receiving the VEA text alerts? Currently 280 members are subscribed to the new TextMarks format.

If you signed up for the remind app during the 2018 labor action, you are NOT automatically enrolled in TextMarks.

In order to maintain a member-only group, you will be asked to identify your first and last name. It will not complete enrollment without this critical identification. **JOIN TODAY!**



## do I need to be interested in politics?

### Your Salary – Washington

State Legislature determines allocations to the district such as regionalization percentage, what constitutes a senior workforce, levy lids, ESA staffing, etc.

**Your Collective Bargaining Rights** – The Legislature can take away rights to collectively bargain working conditions and provisions such as TRI.

**Your Class Size** – The Legislature controls school funding – which affects your class size.

**Your Benefits** – The Legislature initiated and funds SEBB.

**Your Retirement** – The Legislature decides which plans to offer and how they are administered.

**Your School Board** – The School Board is an elected body who makes decisions affecting you directly!



If you are a VEA member, but have yet to join WEA-PAC - you can join electronically

[www.washingtonea.org/joinweapac](http://www.washingtonea.org/joinweapac)

## What is WEA-PAC?

WEA-PAC is Washington Education Association's Political Action Committee. WEA-PAC supports candidates, regardless of party, who champion the needs of public education. Based on input from local WEA-PAC members, WEA-PAC determines how political candidates stand on the issues that affect our members, our schools and our students. We support good candidates who are willing to stand up for public education and union rights.



Candidates from local to statewide positions can and do receive assistance from WEA-PAC. School boards, city councils, the state Legislature, the governor, the superintendent of public instruction and judgeships have all been affected by WEA-PAC and its members.

## Who can join? YOU!!

**#MembershipMatters** - the collective power of WEAPAC speaks volumes. VEA currently holds the second highest WEAPAC member contribution percentage in the STATE!!

- ◆ **WEA-PAC** gives us a voice to fight for increased education funding, increase school quality and improved compensation.
- ◆ **WEA-PAC** helps to elect candidates who will put children and public education first.
- ◆ **WEA-PAC** gives us a strong voice in the debate over key issues – including funding, class size, compensation and accountability.
- ◆ **WEA-PAC** is a powerful voice in lobbying for the right kind of education reform. By being members of WEA-PAC we can work together to help children and strengthen our schools.
- ◆ **WEA-PAC's** political activities help protect the interests of education employees, and give us a better chance of winning improved compensation and health benefits.

Columbia  
Sportswear  
Employee  
Store Access!!



Now that the district is transitioning to hybrid instruction, it may be time to trade in our sweatpants for an updated wardrobe! VEA has partnered with Columbia Sportswear to allow members access to their employee store. VEA members and up to 4 additional guests can save up to 50% off the retail price of items February 19 through March 14, 2021. Hours are Mon-Fri 10 am – 8 pm and Sunday 9 am – 8 pm. Shoppers are required to bring your own face coverings to wear while shopping. You will need this [flier](#) from the VEA website, your employee badge or pay stub and a valid photo ID at check in.

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