

Unity

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The State of Our Union

Democracy in Action

By Olga Addae, SEA President

At the February Representative Assembly, our Association Representatives were asked to make tough decisions. The first was reviewing the results of the SEA budget survey, and determining whether or not the SEA should have a fulltime Vice President for the 2010-2012 term. (See SEA Budget survey results). The RA supported the value of a full release Vice President, and the need for SEA officers to be actively involved in community engagement.

The body also discussed a continuing resolution on high school exit requirements. Look for the latest version on SEA Bulletin Boards.

The most important debate and decision occurred as a result of a report from the SEA Executive Director Glenn Bafia on the state's School Improvement Grant. (Please see related article). The SEA Board was given basic information on the models required by the State for receiving School Improvement Grant dollars. The Board recommended support for the Transformation model. This was not an easy decision as both the Transformation and Turnaround models have elements in them that educators say are not educationally sound. After a long question and answer period, an SEA Board motion was put before the representatives to support the Transformation model. A long debate ensued, a motion to amend by substitution to support the Turnaround model failed. A motion to table to the March RA failed.

Due to the state timelines, to not make a decision would mean these schools would lose the possibility of receiving state grant dollars for the 2010-2011 school year. A tough decision had to be made. I want to personally thank every Association Representative for staying late and giving this careful thought. In the end the SEA Board motion to support the Transformation model prevailed. In my opinion what truthfully prevailed is Democracy, the bedrock of a strong Union.

School Improvement Grant (Change is Coming)

Education has become a top priority of the Obama administration. Part of his administration's goals is to implement what they define as "education reform" to help the lowest achieving schools in the nation. The requirements, attached to federal dollars for our public schools, are causing many states to change laws to coincide with the Obama agenda.

If the education omnibus bill passes in the state legislature this year, and it is likely to, the state will be required to identify the lowest five percent of the schools based on achievement and dropout rates. Those schools identified will be required to restructure their schools using one of four models. All four models have some elements that SEA members' have said they do not believe are educationally sound, but here are the options:

- *Restart*, which re-opens the school as a charter school -- this is illegal in our state;
- *Closure*, which shuts the school down and sends all students to higher performing schools -- this is not an option for us in Seattle.
- *Turnaround* model -- requires that a screening tool be developed to interview all current staff and not more than fifty per cent may be "rehired" into their school.
- *Transformation* model requires a form of performance pay. (More on this model below.)

Even though it will probably be mandatory next year, districts may apply for a grant this year to implement one of the models. This year, the Federal Government has given Washington State \$42,000,000 to use to help the lowest 5% of struggling schools.

Through a *School Improvement Grant*, the state may grant money to be used in these schools if they adopt one of the models above. Each school can be offered up to \$2,000,000 each to support their work.

SPS has chosen to apply for the money and the SEA

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Continuing Resolutions; Speaking to the Community as One Voice

Often members ask why we spend time on Continuing Resolutions. Continuing Resolutions are the belief statements of the SEA membership. They are the platform from which lead Governance can speak on issues. To be adopted they require posting in buildings prior to a vote, and a 2/3 vote of the RA for adoption. The following is an example of a Continuing Resolution which was also robustly debated and adopted at January 2010 Representative Assembly.

The Seattle Education Association will regard seniority as the most equitable and fair way to handle reductions in personnel to ensure reduction in staff at the school level and reduction in force (RIF) at the district level are not enacted in a discriminatory, capricious or arbitrary manner.

There has been much community discussion that arose from the 2009 RIF (Reduction in Force). Recently some community leaders have developed a "community values statement" that includes considering "teacher effectiveness and cohesiveness of school teams, in addition to seniority, when hiring or reducing staff."

The district also recently announced its 2010 priorities in a document called "Strengthening Talent in Every Seattle School" which also included "Add performance as a factor to be considered in layoffs" (along with aligning pay for teachers with strategic goals, but that's a subject for another article).

The District and Community partners miss a very important point that our members share with me repeatedly. Reduction in Force is about how much staff the District can afford at any one moment in time. An evaluation system is about monitoring performance. An evaluation system should never be circumvented.

To tie a teacher's evaluation to RIF would undercut the evaluation system, paving the way for capricious, arbitrary or discriminatory practices in layoff. Instead the district should reprioritize its budget and keep cuts far away from direct student services.

Elections Committee Report

Elections close this week

The WEA paper ballots are due to SEA, sealed in their packets, by the end of the day on March 3. Association Reps are responsible to get the packets to SEA by 5 p.m. on Wednesday.

The Electronic SEA Election for our Delegations to the NEA and WEA Representative Assemblies closed Tuesday. The Elections Committee will post the results on the SEA Website and SEA office's front door March 4.

Nominations are now open for local offices (see box).

Interested in National Board certification?

The District is offering a general information session re: the National Board process:

Monday, March 15 at 4:30 pm @ JSCEE Professional Library (second floor)

Please RSVP on the new PD registration system (go to Employee Self Service on the "inside" site, click Training and Events, then National Board Certification.)

OSPI is now accepting applications for Conditional Loans for 2010-2011 SY candidates. **The second application window is open from April 2 – April 30.**

Contact Jane Dudley with questions, (jedudley@seattleschools.org).

Legislative Update as of February 24, 2010

The last scheduled day of this 60 day legislative session is March 11, 2010. The House budget released February 23, 2010, includes new revenue and does more to protect K-12 education funding than does the Senate budget released three hours earlier. Education Reform continues to also be discussed. The Governor's Omnibus Bill (ESSB 6696) passed the Senate without changes, but has not reached the full House as of this update.

For updates, bookmark www.washingtonea.org/dome, www.seattlewea.org, www.ourvoicewashingtonea.org and join Seattle EA on Facebook and Twitter. For specific questions, you can email Alan Sutliff at asutliff@washingtonea.org. You can also call the Legislative Hotline from a personal phone, on your duty-free lunch or before/after work at 1-800-562-6000 to share your opinion with your legislator.

Nominations open for Local SEA Offices

[Available on our website](#)

SEA President, SEA Executive Vice President, SEA Treasurer (all two yr. terms)

SEA Grade Level Representatives (twelve [12]: three from high schools; two from middle schools; one from multi-grade; five from elementary and one from centrally dispatched) (all two year terms)

Paraprofessional Department: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer

SAEOP Department: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Correspondence Secretary, Treasurer, Members-at-large (three [7])

Substitute Department: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer

Nominations close March 15.

Voting is 3/25 – 4/7/10

Know your contract, Know your rights



How Does Seniority Work with Displacement and Rif?

For certificated staff, displacement of staff from schools and programs, lay off and recall is by seniority within category.

Categories are now aligned with the NCLB subject area requirements.

Displacement occurs when the number of continuing contract staff within a category exceeds a **building's** requirements, but there is **District** capacity so the employee is involuntarily displaced from the building but retained as a District employee for the following year and placed in the "displaced pool".

As schools and programs make decisions about budget and staffing the question of seniority and displacement comes up. What counts as seniority? For certificated staff seniority is the regular contract service in SPS and service transferred from any Washington public schools. Seniority includes certificated substitute service in Washington public schools if you were hired after September 1, 1991.

So if a school does not have capacity for all of the current certificated continuing contract staff, who gets displaced?

Example: If a school does not have capacity to maintain three 1st grade classes, which is an E-5 (grades 1-3) category, the principal would have to review which staff have that category and their seniority. The employee with the least seniority with that category would be displaced from the building; it is not necessarily a first grade teacher that is displaced in this scenario. Seniority is District wide seniority, NOT how long you have taught in that building. The principal should always ask for

employees who are willing to voluntarily displace themselves.

How is **RIF** different from displacement?

With Rif (Reduction in Force/layoff), all employees within a category are placed on a District wide seniority list. If the District does not have capacity for the employee to be retained for employment within the District, they would be riffed or laid off. So even if an employee was not displaced from their building during the budgeting/staffing process, they could be riffed if they have less seniority than other employees with the same category.

Displacement for classified staff, both Paraprofessionals and SAEOP, is based on seniority within current job titles within each building or program. Seniority is defined as regular employment in SPS, excluding time worked as a substitute, hourly employee or extra time. Seniority is all of your District experience, not just the experience within a specific job title. So, if you have five years of experience as an Elementary School Assistant and 5 years in your current position as an Elementary Administrative Secretary, the District would count that as 10 years total seniority in your current job title.

Examples of job titles include SE Instructional Assistant, Fiscal Clerk, Attendance Secretary, Office Specialist III, and Bilingual Instructional Assistant.

If a displaced employee is more senior than an employee in the same job title who was initially identified as retained, the least senior employee would be bumped by the more senior displaced employee and would be riffed/laid off.

Getting pressure to change an IEP?

As a Special Education Teacher, you are obligated to develop Individual Education Programs that are consistent with your professional judgment for each student based off the assessment of the IEP team.

Under the Code of Professional Conduct (Chapter 181-87 WAC) under the heading "[Disregard or Abandonment of Generally Recognized Professional Standards](#)" it states, "Any performance of professional practice in flagrant disregard or clear abandonment of generally recognized professional standards in the course of any of the following professional practices is an act of unprofessional conduct: 1. Assessment, treatment, instruction or supervision of students."

Washington Administrative Code also spells out the role of the IEP Team. [WAC 392 172A 01105](#) defines the IEP Team as "a group of individuals responsible for

developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP." [WAC 392 172A 03095](#) identifies the composition of IEP Team: Parents; general ed teacher; special education teacher, a district representative (one who is qualified to provide or supervise specially designed instruction, knowledgeable of gen ed curriculum, and knowledgeable about the availability of resources) and others. A district representative is only one member of the team and therefore doesn't have the right or ability to decide in absence of the team.

Therefore, if a teacher acts in isolation to change the IEP (based on an administrator's request or otherwise) then they are in violation of a team deciding the IEP.

School Improvement Grant (cont'd from p. 1)

Association Representatives voted to communicate to the District that SEA is willing to negotiate the specifics of the Transformation model in order to apply for the grant money. The three schools in Seattle that qualify are Hawthorne Elementary, West Seattle Elementary and Cleveland High School.

Here are the highlights of the *Transformation model* in the *School Improvement Grant*:

Principals must be replaced if they have been at the school for more than 2 years

Teachers opting in will know all requirements of the job prior to staffing

Strategies have to be implemented that offer financial incentives and career ladder opportunities for recruiting, placing, and retaining effective teachers

A rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation system using student growth as a factor has to be in place

School leaders and teachers have to be identified and rewarded who have increased student achievement and

graduation rates.

Learning time must be significantly extended (day, week, or year)

Ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement must be in place

Those, who after ample opportunity to improve professional practice, have not done so, will be removed from the schools

Teachers will be able to opt out of staying at their schools prior to staffing for 10-11

The SEA is working to negotiate language that our members can live with at these schools. We've already proposed and gotten agreement on things like: any pay for increased student achievement be awarded to the entire school, not individuals; calculating student achievement be "value-added" and compared to like students District wide; and staff be compensated for longer work hours. To see what some of the items may look like and get more information, [click here](#) to see the handout from the February 22 Rep Assembly.

Calendar



Upcoming Association Meetings:

SEA Board meeting: Mon., Mar. 8th, 4:30 p.m. at SEA.

To address the body in the Speak Out section, email: redmond@washingtonea.org.

Parapro Meeting: Tues., Mar. 9th, 5:00 p.m. @ SEA.

Rep Assembly: Mon., Mar. 15th, 4:30 pm., at Washington.

Sub Meeting: Weds., Mar. 24th, 4:00 at SEA.

Upcoming Interview Training:

Interview Training- Tues., Mar. 16th, 4-5pm, SEA Conference Room. Thurs., Mar. 25th, 6-7pm, JSCEE Rm. 2776/2778. Register by contacting Richard at 206.283.8443, or rfisher@washingtonea.org.

The Alliance for Education is holding community meetings to discuss Teacher Quality. You may want to attend one of the following meetings:

March 8th, 6-7pm – 37th Legislative District
Rainier Cultural Arts Center
3515 S. Alaska St.– Seattle, Wa 98118

March 16th, 6:30-8pm
Cleveland High School
5511 15th Ave S.– Seattle, Wa 98108

SEA Budget Survey results

SEA Budget Survey results are online, Look for more information in the April *Unity*. Members are weighing their options. Any dues increase proposal will be voted on by the membership .

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