

# The Connection

Volume XII, Issue I

January 2012



## Hard Times: Despair or Act?

*Affect Public Policy and Tell the Story*



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Daphne Davies

Educators are justifiably ticked off, tired, and too overworked to believe telling their stories will have a positive effect on policymakers. Me too. But, recently we've heard a few stories that belie the notion that there's little or

nothing we can do about the current climate in education in the State of Washington. True, we can't make money grow on trees, but recent examples show how telling it like it is CAN affect public policy.

### Tell Legislators What you Know

Plaudits to newcomer 23rd District legislator Drew Hansen, who was appointed not long ago to fill the spot left when Christine Rolfes was appointed to fill the Senate seat. Hansen wondered about STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Math) programs being discussed. As a learner, Hansen did the right thing and wisely asked the experts for help: the educators who teach the kids. His letter of thanks is reprinted with permission in full below.

*Dear Patrick, Eric, Tim, Blake, and Lisa,*

I wanted to thank all of you for taking time to speak to me about career and technical education and particularly about your experiences with the "Project Lead the Way" curriculum. I reached out to you because the Governor's aerospace

package included a grant program for STEM education that was limited to programs using the PLTW curriculum, so I wanted to see how PLTW had worked in our district. Several of you told me that you found PLTW wasn't a perfect fit for our area because it didn't work seamlessly with Olympic College or with our local employers.

**"because of your concerns, I worked with...other legislators and the Governor to modify the bill...you made a difference in the shape of education policy in Washington State today!"**

*Drew Hansen, 23rd Legislative District Representative*

Because of your concerns, I worked with several other legislators and the Governor's staff to modify the bill to take off the limitation to PLTW courses and instead open it up to any program using a national multidisciplinary STEM curriculum. The elimination of the PLTW limitation gives local educators the opportunity to identify some other equivalent national STEM curriculum that fits better with local needs than PLTW.

I'm happy to report that we just passed the bill (HB 2159) with the amendment out of the House of Representatives. Your feedback made it possible for me to advocate with other legislators and the Governor's staff for the amendment. So thank you very, very much for your input; you made a difference in the shape of education policy in Washington State today!

*Drew [Hansen, State Representative, 23rd District]*

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# Act Now!

(continued from page 1)

## Organize and Testify

Here's another "good" story from last year's legislative session, where Chimacum EA member and science teacher Maren Johnson lobbied for changes to the state's science assessment. She kept the pressure up and literally at "the eleventh hour," was rewarded with a decision to delay an expensive and ill-conceived science HSPE.

She said, in part: "I'd like to tell you a story. A story about last year's legislative session. It's the story of how we as teachers, those of us in the 24th legislative district and beyond, made a huge difference in Washington state education." She goes on to detail the actions she took as she wrote letters, testified, organized others to lobby legislators and speak to house and senate committees.

And the conclusion is: "In the Chimacum Education Association, we are small, but mighty. But we are not just Chimacum, not just Port Townsend, and not just the Olympic and Kitsap Peninsulas. Teachers all across Washington state are standing up. We have long been the voice of common sense education reform."

You can read Maren Johnson's full article, on her [Big Rock Blog](#)

## Be the Expert You Are

Think what you say and know isn't going to make a change? Check both of the situations above. Proof positive that it does. It's true that it takes a village to teach a child. And it's also true that we're all in this together. Let's get together to affect public policy for the good of the kids! Great Educators, Great Schools, Great Kids. You can make a difference: counteract despair and **Act Now**. Send an email to your legislator: via [ourvoice-washington.org](http://ourvoice-washington.org) or call and leave a message on the Legislative Hotline: (800) 562-6000.

The Connection is an online member newsletter published by WEA Olympic Council, a regional office of the Washington Education Association.

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## Special Session *Not* So Special

After 17 days, the legislature adjourned the special session without completing their job. Like Congress, they talked a lot, delayed decisions and made little progress in closing the \$2

million biennial shortfall. Luckily public education did not sustain big cuts yet. Out of the \$480m in cuts and fund transfers, OSPI was reduced another 10% and school bus depreciation was delayed again by moving the savings into the next budget year.

Buckle your seat belts once the Legislature reconvenes on January 9 for their 60-day regular session. WEA members will be lobbying to:

**Stop Further Cuts that hurt our students and school employees** – raising class sizes, shortening the school year (in addition to this year's 1.9% pay reduction), discriminatory decreases to levy equalization, removing local control over employee insurance coverage are just some of the ideas being considered.

**Stop Negative Legislation** – Many public sector unions are fighting the erosion/elimination of collective bargaining rights. We must be vigilant to make sure we don't become like Ohio, Wisconsin or Idaho. Previous legislation is bound to return – tying certificated layoff to evaluation, charter schools, limiting union rights to be involved in the democratic process, etc.

**Advocate for New Revenue** – Washington has the most regressive tax system in the nation. Adding to the state sales tax continues to put more on those who can least afford it. The Governor's ½ cent proposal is a band-aid which does not raise enough money. WEA is pushing for progressive, sustainable revenue by closing loopholes and creating a fairer tax system.

You can keep up-to-date with legislative action that impacts educators and public education by checking in at [OurVoiceWashington](http://OurVoiceWashington) over the next few months!

## Online Classes for Special Educators

Registration is now open for all 2012 WEA special education online classes. Classes can be accessed 24 hours a day. Cost is \$60 per class which includes 10 clock hour credits. One college credit is available from SPU for an additional \$40. Courses are limited to 30 participants and fill quickly. Go to the WEA [website](#) for more details.



# HCA Takeover Plan = Less for More

During the 2011 Legislative session, the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) was directed to develop recommendations for a consolidated public school employee health benefits system and submit a final report to the Legislature by mid-December. The recently released report calls for the takeover of K-12 school employee health benefits.

The Washington Education Association is opposed to the state takeover of K-12 employee health benefit system by giving it to a state health care agency that costs more, delivers less, can't pay claims on time and has a terrible service record. And, it's a plan that shifts a substantial financial risk onto local school districts and taxpayers.



## Impose higher Costs

- **Adds more than \$21.5 million in NEW taxpayer costs:** \$12 million for start up costs in 2011-13, plus \$9.5 million for additional start up costs in fiscal year 2014. The ongoing cost is then estimated to be \$7.1 million per year.
- Requires an additional **\$25 million per year paid by employees through higher premiums** and “**point-of-service cost sharing**” (higher fees).
- **Shifts all future cost risks to school districts for costs above the state allocation.**
- **Abandons a system that today costs less and provides more:** Currently, the state pays \$768 a month per full-time equivalent K-12 employee vs. \$850 per full-time state employee, yet K-12 employees get coverage that is as good or better than what state employees receive.

## Reduce benefits

- Requires lower overall benefits to avoid immediate cost increases.
- Wipes out health care coverage entirely for thousands of part-time employees who work less than half time.

## Eliminate competition and expand state government

- Replaces competition among plans school districts select from with a state monopoly that selects one carrier for all K-12 employees.
- Adds another costly function to the state bureaucracy at a time when vital funding for K-12 education and other services is being cut.

## Abandon K-12 employee collective bargaining and local decision-making

- Transfers all decision-making authority to the Health Care Authority and a newly created board; the proposal stacks the board membership in favor of the administration resulting in only token membership for employee groups.
- Removes employee health benefits from the scope of collective bargaining for all school employee groups.

## Reward poor customer service

- HCA had a recent **9-month backlog** in paying state employee health insurance claims.
- Courts ruled against HCA for illegally barring some Medicaid patients from emergency room care.
- Recent Seattle Times exposé highlighted how the agency's cost-cutting practices were harming patients.
- Adding over 100,000 enrollees to a K-12 program administered by the HCA would likely mean customer service problems for K-12 employees.
- K-12 employees have had the option to enroll in the state employee health care plan since 1995, and less than one percent of the K-12 employees have made that choice.

**The HCA proposal is a plan based on higher costs, bigger government, less competition, and poor customer service.**

# January 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 	2 New Year's Day observed	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 2012 Legislative Session begins in Olympia	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 MLK Day	17	18	19	20 West Side bargaining registra- tion deadline. <a href="#">Info</a>	21
22	23 Executive Board 4:30 pm Council office	24	25 Bargaining Training 5 pm Council office <a href="#">RSVP</a>	26 Crossroads Meeting @ Olympic ESD, Bremerton 10 am -1pm <a href="#">RSVP</a>	27	28
29	30	31				

## Professional Certification Resources

Washington teachers certified after Aug. 31, 2000 are required to attain professional certification. The ProTeach® portfolio, a fully online assessment run by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), is the means by which teachers earn their professional certification.

**Don't Let Your Certificate Lapse!** There is a consequence for allowing a residency certificate to expire. Teachers who have exhausted all available renewals of their residency certificate and have not passed the ProTeach® assessment or earned a National Board certificate will have their residency certificate expire and will not be eligible for reinstatement of teacher licensure for five years past the expiration date of their final residency certificate. (WAC 181-79A-231(7)(A))

**Resources Available** — The Professional Educator Standards Board has created a [resource page](#) for teachers. For information on your **specific** reissuance and renewal options please contact OSPI certification office by phone (360) 725-6400 or e-mail [cert@k12.wa.us](mailto:cert@k12.wa.us)

**WEA ProTeach® Jump Start Seminars** – provides candidates with important information about the portfolio requirements, time to examine the three-entry portfolio in detail and the opportunity to plan how to meet requirements. This pre-candidacy support option helps candidates to prepare for the process and complete work with a support group during candidacy. Click [here](#) for more information about the ProTeach® Jump Start Seminars.

**Winter Seminar** — A condensed two-day Jump Start seminar (20 hours) will be held in Federal Way on March 2-3, 2012 (Friday/Saturday). Trainings will be 10 hours each day (8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.) and will include breakfast, lunch and dinner. Participants must cover their own substitutes, if needed, for the Friday portion of the training. Up to 20 clock hours are included in the registration fee. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information and registration details, click [here](#).

