

The Grapevine

Vol. XVII, Issue 1

East Whittier Education Association

Fall 2017

Next Rep Council Meeting: 3:45pm

Current Representatives:

Ceres: Patricia Magana-Perez

East Whittier: Linda Arroyo-Blas, Sheri Harder, Elizabeth Sanchez

Evergreen: Jared Wycoff

Granada: Caron Cole, Dena Oshann, (Open) one less vote

Hillview: Mike Seyler, MyLinh Nguyen

La Colima: Eva Wheeler

Laurel: Cameron Briggs, Jenny Shelley

Leffingwell: Carol M. Ferguson, Teresa Bruckner

Mulberry: Valeria Gutierrez

Murphy Ranch: Kevin Connard

Ocean View:: Laura Sullivan, (Open)

Orchard Dale: Melissa Espino

Scott Avenue: Melinda H. Carrillo, Andrew Moraga

Itinerates: Trena Varos, Theresa Cronin, (Open)

Open = -1 vote for that site

President's Perspective

By Missy Michaud, Hillview

*W*elcome back. This year has started off so quickly---one blink and we're already through with conferences.

I'd like to extend an official welcome to Superintendent Patterson. We appreciate his taking time to visit each campus, and we look forward to having a good working relationship with him.

As you know, eWEa Executive Board has also made site visits to reach out and touch base. As a result, every site has newly elected Representatives ready to work with you.

During those site visits, many concerns have been brought up, including bargaining, NGSS adoption, class sizes and 1:1 computer roll out at the middle schools.

Below are updates on each of those topics.

Bargaining---we are in a full contract year which means all language is on the table. As with every year, salary and benefits are on the table, too. The team has been working since May on language. What's left now are benefits and salary. The District has a 17+% reserve, and that's where our discussions begin.

NGSS adoption---it's been a rocky start, but we've been working with the District to provide reasonable release time for teachers to work together.

Class size---class sizes at the upper grades are out of control. Our numbers are far above agreed upon class sizes. To hire enough teachers to bring the numbers down is not possible, however, especially if we continue with declining enrollment; they would have to be let go after a couple of years. The Association is working to get language in place to get the numbers down over the next few years.

Computer roll out---the District is looking to have 1:1 computers at the middle school level for every student to take home. I am not terribly comfortable with this: not because it's a bad idea, but because it's a bad idea to do it without a plan. Originally the plan was to have 1:1 computers housed at the sites for student use in January 2018. The take-home roll out would come in August of 2018. However, that plan seems to have changed to a January 2018 take home. What are the logistics of this plan? Over \$400,000 was spent...but there are as yet no details to this new plan. How many districts are actually doing this with success? What will be the on-going costs? How will this work with special ed students and their IEPs? What do we now have to legally provide for students to have equal access at home (William's Law)? What's the rush?

All of these are issues the Association will raise at the bargaining table, at our meetings with Superintendent Patterson, and at future Board meetings. If any of these issues are of importance to you, let your Site Representative know. Better yet, come share your thoughts at a Board meeting (or come support me in the audience when I speak on these topics).

eWEa

7200 S. Greenleaf Ave. Suite 360
Whittier, CA 90602

www.eweonline.com

President Missy Michaud:

Email: missyeweaa@gmail.com

Office: 562-696-5879

Hours: Mondays 9am-4pm

Office Manager Mary Villelli:

Email: maryeweaa@gmail.com

Office: 562-696-5879

Hours: M-F 10:30am-2:30pm

Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

What exactly is a Professional Learning Community? (PLC)

Professional Learning Communities were in vogue in 2004. However, they represent best practices for student learning. The idea was to take islands of learning/teaching connected by a common parking lot and making schools learning communities. The East Whittier School District under Dr. Gillentine sent leadership from each of the middle schools up to Seattle to be trained for PLC's.

The DuFours and Anthony Muhammad presented at their seminar on changing the current school culture from the focus being on teaching practices to student learning.

You can Google Richard DuFour or Anthony Muhammad and see the all of the articles and books that they have published about creating learning communities.

How does that affect our Middle School Tuesday early release days? Well, it started when the leadership came back and because common prep periods with same grade and subject were difficult, but not impossible to schedule, those Tuesdays were designated as PLC's. The purpose of the agenda was to keep the time focused and shared leadership. The agenda gave the members past, present and future to remind and plan for the meetings.

There are 3 BIG IDEAS involved, and one more component. The first Big Idea is **Ensuring that Students Learn**. The second Big Idea is **A Culture of Collaboration**, and the third is **A Focus on Results**. The final component is **Response to Intervention**, what happens when students are not learning.

What does that look like on a campus, since the implementation of PLC's common assessments, common lessons and learning goals have been established. Collaborative teams have been working over the years focused on student learning. The most difficult part of these collaborative teams is when not all

members can make the meetings, Special Educators, and teachers with multiple preps would have to decide which meetings to attend, District meetings, trainings, and school meetings took members away, or took time away from the teams.

For current PLC's:

- Agendas should be teacher driven
- Focus on curriculum
- Meeting with grade level or subject
- EWMS PLC Collaboration Tool *—only fill out the appropriate boxes for your collaboration*

Here is an example:

Yellow Box—Current Topic or Concept

Percent of Change, Family Math Night

(if you are in the planning stage this is all you fill out)

Orange Box—Describe Assessment method

4 different word problems (2 increase, 2 decrease)

Green Box—Plan for intervention

Re-teaching within class room

Blue Box—What could be done if they know...

Students work on HOT math

Purple Box—What is next

Will meet again to create a common assessment rubric

Beige Box—More paper for copies for re-teaching

CREDENTIAL CHECK

Keep informed about your Credentials and their renewal dates. The district no longer kindly reminds us and it is now our responsibility. Go to ctc.ca.gov and check out your renewal dates. You can lose your salary if your credential is not up to date! Keeping your credential current is your responsibility.

Cha... Cha... Changes...

Have you moved, changed your address or name?

Let eWEa's Office manager Mary Vilelli know by emailing the information to her at maryeweaa@gmail.com. It is important to keep your information current so that you can access all of the wonderful benefits that membership offers you.

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

"If an employee has a reasonable belief that discipline or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says, the employee has the right to request union representation. When the employee makes the request for a union representative to be present management has three

options:

1. it can stop questioning until the representation arrives.
2. It can call off the interview or,
3. It can tell the employee that it will call off the interview unless the employee voluntarily gives up his/her rights to union representation (an option the employee should always refuse)."

Complaint Procedures: To Help or Hinder the Process

by Almeda Rodriguez

As the past Grievance Chair for the Association, I was contacted a number of times throughout the school year. Often times, the issues are concerning some aspect of the complaint procedure outlined in or collective bargaining agreement. You may have a hard copy, or it can be accessed on the District website, so I am not going to state it here. However, I can tell you the nuts and bolts of the language, its intention, and how it is usually butchered. Basically, it says that if someone (parent, staff member, administrator, etc.) has a concern regarding a bargaining unit member, that person must go directly to that person first, in an attempt to get clarity and hopefully resolve the issue.

For example, if Teacher A has a problem with the amount of noise coming from the classroom of his neighbor, Teacher B, then Teacher A needs to talk to Teacher B about it and hopefully solve the problem. It is likely Teacher B didn't realize the decibel level of exuberance emanating from her classroom was so high, and will try to lower the noise level, once made aware of the problem. I am told by many, that this is an awkward position to be in. Yes, it is, but we have to do it anyway. Once it gets to the administrator level, the problem often seems bigger than it really is, and feelings get hurt. Therefore, going to the source first, can deescalate a problem, and bring a resolution satisfying to all parties a lot easier and faster.

Similarly, if Teacher B has a problem with the way her administrator is orchestrating say, an evening event, then Teacher B would go to the administrator and express her concerns. In a perfect world, the administrator would be willing to discuss the event and consider other ideas and/or options to make the event, not only in-line with any contractual issues, but also a better event overall—especially if it now has more staff buy-in due to the collaborative effort that took place. Also, people won't be resentful because they are forced to be doing something not of their choosing, *and* the contract may be in violation.

There is another important scenario to remind you about: parent complaints towards a teacher. If a parent bypasses the teacher in question and goes directly to the administrator, the contract language clearly directs the administrator to redirect the parent back to the teacher, so again, they can try to resolve whatever the issue is.

To be honest, the failure of administrators to do this is brought up at least once or twice a year. The problem is

that by the time the issue gets to this level, the administrator might see the resolution to the issue as some kind of disciplinary action towards the teacher. If the administrator had only given the teacher an opportunity to: A) know there was a problem; and B) resolve it with the parent first, at this informal level, again, chances are, most involved would have discovered the issue was probably a lack of communication, or a misperception, on someone's part, and easy to fix.

Oh, and by the way, this also happens between teachers and fellow staff members, so we aren't innocent of this gaff, either. It is not easy going directly to someone and having some really difficult conversations, but, it is the right thing to do, and what our contract says we must do. If that isn't possible, then as Rambo would say, "Let it go."

I have heard instances where an administrator has gone to a teacher and alluded to a parent complaint without given the parent's name, or even the student's in question. My question is: how can a teacher fix a problem they don't know who it is with? If an administrator will not share the name of the person voicing the complaint, then you can't be expected to rectify the situation in any fair or logical manner. Please let the Association know if this happens to you.

Now, in administrators' defense (yes, you read correctly, I just wrote that), in over 30 years of teaching, I have had an administrator tell me after the fact about a conversation he/she had with a parent. I was also told that the parent was a "complicated" one, and that there was an attempt to try to save me from having to deal with an issue that really wasn't mine, or was clarified before it could be directed back to me. It simply was not something I needed to hassle myself with. At the time, I said, "Thanks," for that effort on my behalf. Sometimes, you have to take each situation as a stand-alone, and figure out what battles you want to fight, and which, not. I know, I am contradicting myself; I just said the contract must be followed—and yes, it does. But really, you have to look at the intentions behind the person who was in violation. Were they trying to help or hinder the process?

SPOTLIGHT ON MEMBERS

SITE REPRESENTATIVES ELECTED!

Congratulations to the site representatives that were elected using our electronic voting. Almost all sites have their allotted representatives that reflect their votes at the Representative Council Meetings. It is important that your voice is heard. Reps will be holding 10 minute meetings so support your Reps and attend. The Reps are also your voice at the council and bring up concerns that have not been able to be resolved through other channels. Anyone can attend a Representative meeting, however only elected members may vote.

Site Representatives by Site:

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Are you familiar with the Social Security Fairness Act of 2017 (H.R. 1205)?

If not, you should be! The current structure of Social Security does not allow educators who have paid into Social Security from previous jobs to collect their benefits when they retire. It also does not allow educators to collect their spouse's benefits when they die. H.R. 1205 wants to eliminate this and help make social security benefits fair for all who have paid into the system. Please go to www.ssfairness.com to read more about the Social Security Fairness Act and to find ways how you can get involved in making sure social security benefits are available to all those entitled to receiving them.

Congratulations to eWEa's Retirees

May 11th eWEa and EWCS D combined to honor seven members who are or have retired this year. Congratulations and best wishes to Donita Montano, District Nurse, Donna Stinson, Phyllis Smith, Christine Votaw, Phyllis Prado, , Jan Thompson, and Mary Branca

Best wishes also to last minute retirees Madeline Shapiro, and Denise Jasso.

Congratulations for a well earned and deserved retirement !

EWEA Contacts

eWEa Executive Board Members

Missy Michaud, President

missyeweaa@gmail.com

Kelly Sunada, 1st Vice President

kellyeweaa@gmail.com

Marie Klobucar, 2nd Vice President

mariekeweaa@gmail.com

Jose Alfonso Del Rio, Secretary

jalfonsodelrio@gmail.com

Vanessa Agyei, Treasurer

vanessaeweaa@gmail.com

Melissa Torres, Member-at-Large

melissaeweaa@gmail.com