The Legislative Preview Edition

21st Century Education in an 18th Century School: Inside Slack Elementary, One of America’s Last One-Room Schoolhouses. See Page 8.

See How Career & Technology Education is Shaping One Wyoming Community

Positively Mental: This WEA Member’s Podcast is Making Mental Health Information More Accessible Across Wyoming.
WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE

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On The Cover: Wyoming Capitol Building
The success of WEA depends on members stepping up and getting involved in our member-driven organization. Without members like you getting involved, we would not be able to be as successful as we are in advocating for our students and our profession.

There are many ways that you can be active in your Association. One way is to run for office. The WEA offices that will be on the ballot this year are listed on page 6. All the information you need to run for office is on the WEA website: wyoea.org. We will be electing statewide officers, regional officers from the different regions, and at-large representatives to the WEA board who represent their constituency groups. We need active, involved members like you to serve on the WEA board of directors, so consider running for one of these positions. We need your knowledge and expertise on our board! You could be instrumental in setting the direction of your Association and education in our state.

The NEA Representative Assembly is held each year over the fourth of July. This year it will be held in Atlanta, Georgia. We will be electing both state and cluster delegates to attend the NEA Representative Assembly, and you could be one of them! As a RA delegate, you would be part of setting the next two-year NEA budget and setting the course for NEA. We will debate and vote on national education issues and learn about what is happening in education around our nation. It is a great way to learn more about the NEA and to meet education employees from all over the US.

If you are not ready to step up at the regional or state level, consider running for a position at your local level. Talk to your local president about running for a local office or being a building representative for your worksite. The strength of your local depends on people like you stepping up and getting involved. It is a great way to have your voice heard at the local level!

We will be holding our WEA Delegate Assembly (DA) March 27 – 29 at the Red Lion Hotel in Cheyenne. DA is your opportunity to set the direction for the Wyoming Education Association for the next year. We will be reviewing and making possible amendments to our constitution, bylaws, platforms, budget, and any new business items that members bring forward. DA also provides a unique opportunity for delegates to network with education employees from around our state. We will be holding a candidate forum for delegates to ask questions of the people running for WEA president and vice president; it will be a great way to learn more about these candidates!

Maybe WEA local office isn’t a good fit for you, but public office is! 2020 is an election year: The entire Wyoming House and half of the Senate will be up for election. We need to have pro-education people running for these positions in our state! If you know someone who would make an excellent legislator, inquire with them about their interest in running for office. Or, consider running for a seat, yourself. We need more educators in the legislature. When we work together, we can accomplish great things for students and education in Wyoming.

Members interested in running for a vacant office must submit necessary candidate forms and additional materials to WEA Membership Specialist, Linda Bottom at lbottom@wyoea.org no later than Friday, February 28, 2020. To learn more about running and download the appropriate forms, visit www.runforwea.com.
CONTINUED ADVOCACY IS ESSENTIAL TO STUDENT SUCCESS

WEA Executive Director, rsniffin@wyoea.org

Thanks to our state’s investment in education, Wyoming students are consistently outperforming peers in neighboring states and across the nation, as evidenced by both the 2019 Quality Counts Report and the 2019 NAEP Scores. WEA has advertised Wyoming student achievement across print, radio, television, and social media ads, recognizing Wyoming students as the Best in the West. The exemplary achievement of Wyoming students proves that dedicated educators, committed constituents, and consistent advocacy for education in Wyoming are paying off. Ultimately, their exceptional performance is indicative of the effectiveness of Wyoming’s education funding model and the importance of continuing to provide ample and equal opportunity for Wyoming students.

We cannot rest on our laurels, and we cannot penalize our students’ excellence by becoming complacent about school funding. We face a significant battle to keep and improve funding in the next session. We must continue to prioritize education funding and work together to convey to legislators that Wyoming citizens value excellent student achievement and fully support our schoolchildren.

With the 2020 Budget Session kicking off February 10, the WEA Lobby Team will be hard at work advocating for students and educators to continue to receive adequate resources necessary for quality education. WEA members are critical to our continued success at the legislature. I encourage you to get to know your representative and senator. There are no better lobbyists than members like you, especially if you already have existing relationships with your legislators. You are the experts on education issues, and we can help our elected officials understand what’s best and necessary for education in Wyoming.

To help you learn how to effectively lobby your legislators, I encourage all WEA members to attend the Equality State Policy Center’s SHAPE Wyoming citizen lobby training. It takes place February 23-24 in Cheyenne. SHAPE empowers regular people to engage with the Wyoming Legislature on the issues that matter to them and their communities by helping attendees to navigate the political process, and influence key policymakers. WEA members enjoy free admission to SHAPE, and guests traveling extended distances to attend may be eligible for a complimentary hotel room (based on double occupancy) and a mileage reimbursement. Learn more at bit.ly/shapewy2020.

WEA provides many avenues by which members can stay informed and engaged in legislative happenings during the session. You will find a daily legislative update email in your inbox throughout the session. Members can also keep up with real-time updates from the WEA Lobby Team on WEA’s new Legislative Affairs Blog and follow legislation impacting education through the WEA Bill Tracker at wealegislativeinfo.com.

In prioritizing education, Wyoming ensures that our students enjoy equitability and opportunity as they prepare for their futures. Lend your voice to ensuring that legislators continue to honor our priorities as a state and maintain the best possible educational environment in Wyoming for today’s students and for generations to come.

Learn more about student achievement in Wyoming at wyomingstudents.org
Register for SHAPE at bit.ly/shapewy2020
Rachel's Challenge provides K-12 assemblies (and professional development) that create safer and more connected schools through the incredible life and writings of Rachel Joy Scott, the first victim of the Columbine tragedy. Calendars are booking up for 2020. Call your state rep, Sage, to learn more about grants available for Wyoming schools at: 719.203.5703

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Rachel's Challenge provides K-12 assemblies (and professional development) that create safer and more connected schools through the incredible life and writings of Rachel Joy Scott, the first victim of the Columbine tragedy. Calendars are booking up for 2020. Call your state rep, Sage, to learn more about grants available for Wyoming schools at: 719.203.5703

www.rachelschallenge.org
NOMINATION FORMS AVAILABLE ONLINE

2020 WEA VACANCIES

STATE/NATIONAL OFFICES:
WEA President 3-year term
WEA Vice President 3-year term
WEA ESP Statewide Representative 2-year term
WEA Ethnic Minority Statewide Representative 2-year term
WEA Higher Education Statewide Representative 2-year term

REGION OFFICES:
Central Region Representative 2-year term
NE Region President 2-year term
NE Region Vice President 2-year term
NW Region President 2-year term
SE Region President 2-year term
SE Region Vice President 2-year term
SE Region Representative 2-year term
SW Region Representative 2-year term

STATE DELEGATES TO NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY:
NEA RA State Delegate (Category 1) – 2-year term - up to 5 delegates
NEA RA State Delegate (Category 2) - 1-year term - 1 delegate
NEA RA Region Cluster Delegates (1-year term) --- this includes Certified and ESP members who belong to a local with less than 75 members
CR Cluster 1 delegate
NER Cluster 1 delegate
NWR Cluster 3 delegates
SER Cluster 2 delegate
SWR Cluster 2 delegates
NEA RA State ESP Cluster Delegate --- (ESP Members with no local) – 1 delegate

WWW.RUNFORWEA.COM.
Set against rugged, snowy mountains and unsettled frontier, the Slack schoolhouse is busy, warm, and inviting. The cozy one-room school is one of the last of its kind in America; it is the only one-room schoolhouse still in use in Sheridan County. In operation for more than 100 years, today Slack School serves a class of four students. “They have a brotherhood here; we’ve got four boys here this year,” teacher Brooke Johnson told WEA News, “they fight like brothers, they love like brothers. I love the sense of family here.”

A National Board Certified Teacher, Mrs. Johnson has been teaching in Sheridan County for nine years, three of them here at Slack. Johnson tells WEA News that teaching across grade levels, in such a unique classroom, has expanded her skills and contributed to her philosophy as a teacher. “I’ve gotten a better understanding of what learning is over time. I used to teach isolated skills, and I didn’t really understand how they would fit in later,” said Johnson. “Overall, it’s given me more of a holistic view of what learning is.”

But, Johnson shares, teaching at Slack has its challenges. “It can sometimes be difficult to make sure that I fit it all in: music, art writing, reading, math. I have to be mindful to ensure that I cover everything and,” adds Johnson, “that it conforms to the academic rigor that my students need and deserve.” Once a week, a piano teacher visits Slack to teach, and a community volunteer—an art major and former teacher—provides a few hours of arts education each week, as well.

Other than Mrs. Johnson, there are no staff members at Slack. But, there are two very unorthodox visitors welcome in her classroom each day; a graying black lab named Gunny and a Basset Hound puppy named Copper. “I have a Basset Hound, and his name is Copper like off of Fox and the Hound,” shared second-grader Marlis Johnson, “and then the other one is Gunny. He’s teaching Copper
how to sleep.” About Slack’s canine classroom companions, Johnson says, “They warn us of approaching vehicles; that’s their main purpose since we are out here alone. When Homeland Security visited here several years ago, they mentioned it would be a good idea to have a dog to bark and alert us. Also,” Johnson adds, “they’re great reading partners, the kids love to read to them.”

Because of their picturesque surroundings, it may come as no surprise that students at Slack spend a lot of time outdoors. “Our recesses are very different, said Johnson, “we’re always outside. Our PE is different as well: We’ll do cross-country skiing or, we did kayaking this fall. It’s awesome to see how this rural escape sparks their creativity.”

Despite their non-traditional classroom, the elementary school students at Slack have many of the same experiences, hopes, and dreams as their peers across Wyoming. Second-grader Marlis Johnson shared with WEA News his favorite parts of the school day: “Recess and lunch, and I love to do math because we get to do fractions.” When asked what he wants to be when he grows up? “An NFL football player, for the Cowboys.”

In so many ways, the education provided at Slack is a dichotomy of commonality and difference between a more traditional, 21st-century educational experience. Students enjoy snacks, sipping hot cocoa and munching popcorn through storytime, but they eat lunch in the teacherage, a building next door to the school—once called home by many previous Slack teachers over the past century. They work one-on-one with Mrs. Johnson, learning reading, writing, and math. Yet, they spend much of their day problem-solving and working with students of different ages and grade levels. They work diligently on modern technology, using iPads and computers, before heading outside to build snow forts on the frontier.

In some ways, Slack is a relic harkening back to a simpler time. In others, it delivers a modern, effective, and—for some—preferable education to its students. One thing is as true at Slack today, as it was 100 years ago: a skilled educator is working dedicatedly to best prepare a future generation of Wyomingites to leave the classroom. “It’s just a wonderful opportunity, and I’m so thankful for it,” said Johnson. “I’m so thankful that we still have schools like this.”

“WEA is comprised of a lot of other teachers throughout the state that you can rely on and talk to about different things. It creates a lot of opportunities, and I value that sense of security in other teachers.” -WEA member, K-5 teacher Brooke Johnson
The 2020 Census Matters for Every Student:

Here’s Why

The importance of the U.S. Census to the well-being of children and the strength of their public schools cannot be overstated.

Using census data, the federal government allocates tens of billions of dollars in education funds to states and localities annually using formulas that factor in population and poverty levels.

An accurate census count is the critical first step to helping educators address the needs of every child who walks through their doors. The census count happens only once every ten years; when we undercount young children, the consequences can last most of their childhood.

“Educators are trusted, and we can reassure others that participation in the census is safe, important, and necessary,” says Utah elementary teacher and NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia. “Being counted helps ensure that all communities receive their fair share of federal and state funding for schools and other critical services.”

Census data determine the distribution of more than $800 billion, including to programs that help our students. Some of those programs provide supports for children with special needs and those from low-income families. These funds help schools reduce class sizes, hire specialists, continuously bolster teacher quality, offer preschool to low-income families, and ensure that hungry students can get breakfast or lunch to help them pay attention in class.

Census data are also critical to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which keeps millions of families out of poverty and has lasting benefits for children’s health and academic success.

Talk to your family, coworkers, and friends about what is at stake for public schools in the census. Check out the Census Bureau’s Statistics in Schools site at census.gov/schools, where you can learn more about the census, and find lesson plans, maps, historical data, plus coloring pages, quizzes, word finds, and more.
More than 60 educators at Clear Creek Middle School in Buffalo took part in a Poverty Simulation, as part of a teacher in-service day. “WEA has been doing Poverty Simulations for a few years to help our members better understand the experience of students and families in poverty,” said WEA Central/Northeast UniServ Director, Judy Trohkimoinen. “It’s an in-depth simulation of living for a month in poverty and deciding how to pay bills, keep a family fed and keep a household running on limited funds.”

“It was interesting because I felt pretty helpless,” said WEA member and English teacher at Buffalo Highschool, Karen Blaney. “That really made me think about kids who are in need and might not even know who they can ask for help. That’s something to look out for,” added Blaney. “We don’t always know who—of our students—has had their water turned off or who doesn’t have food.”

We hope that after experiencing the simulation, our members are more understanding of students and families living in poverty and can point them towards resources in their communities,” said Trohkimoinen.

As a small business owner and employer in the Buffalo community, high school business teacher Kami Kennedy is attuned to the fact that paycheck-to-paycheck living is a reality for some in Buffalo. But, Kennedy found the Poverty Simulation to be valuable nonetheless. “There was nothing extra. We were just paying for needs. There were no wants involved: we weren’t paying for a phone, we weren’t paying to go to McDonald’s. Any luxury like that was not even on the table,” said Kennedy. “We were making just enough to get by. Which, we did. But, it was difficult.”

Many educators took the same lesson away from the Poverty Simulation: “Be more aware of students’ situations,” said Kennedy. “Just be more empathetic.” Karen Blaney echoed this concept, adding “It’s important for educators to be on alert that kids who might look bored or disinterested, or angry, are—in some cases—really covering for other circumstances in their lives outside of the classroom.”

Multiple WEA staff members are trained in orchestrating Poverty Simulations.

To bring the experience to your school, contact your UniServ Director.
The Art of Teaching:  
Q & A With Award-Winning Art Teacher Sheila McHattie

Natrona County Education Association (NCEA) member Sheila McHattie has been teaching art for 41 years. An award-winning educator, Sheila’s been recognized across Wyoming and the nation. She’s received the Wyoming Secondary Art Educator Award, the Wyoming Art Educator Award, and been named the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Pacific Region Secondary Art Educator of the Year. Now, on the verge of retirement, Sheila reflects on her career, her longtime WEA membership, and her words of advice for the next generation of art educators and students.

1) What makes a great art teacher?

A great art teacher is like with any teacher; it starts with connecting with kids in a way that builds relationships. Great teachers build respect and inspire students to find their passion. It doesn’t matter if you’re an art teacher or an english teacher—whatever it is that you do—it’s about being able to build relationships with kids: that’s the most important thing to me. It’s all about relationships.

2) What’s the most important thing for students to learn from your class?

The most important thing for students to learn from my class is how to direct their learning process. When students learn how to empower their process, they own their learning. There is no stopping them when they discover they have unlimited potential.

3) Do all students have the potential to be great artists?

Every student has the potential to be a great artist. They have to decide if they want to take on the challenge. If you’re going to be a great artist—a great anything—it’s about finding that passion and learning how to accept a challenge and take steps to achieve.

9) What’s been most rewarding about your career?

The relationships. That’s why teachers are in education. That’s what it’s all about, that’s why you do this. You have to love kids. You have to want to be with them.

10) What’s been most frustrating?

The most frustrating thing has been building support for arts funding over the years. Things are getting better. The research is out there that shows how art education impacts overall achievement. Students’ engaging in the arts raises academic achievement across the board. Students that are building community in the arts build cohesion within their communities and stay connected to the world as a whole. People are starting to see how arts and creativity are valuable.

11) What would you tell students wanting to become professional artists?

Keep your eyes and ears open to the world around you. Observe everything and stay connected to your passion. Work hard and keep at it.

12) What advice do you have for students wishing to pursue a career as art educators?

Keep it real: Start with knowing your students and building strong relationships.
13) Having been a WEA member for more than 30 years, what has WEA membership meant for you?

I gained a lot of leadership skills and kept on the pulse of what was happening in my district. My membership kept me informed. I also built relationships with a lot of administrators and a lot of other teachers, which was huge for me. Leadership development gained through the Association was useful to me.

Learning how to communicate with administrators productively has been invaluable to me as a teacher, especially in my leadership abilities in the district. Plus, it’s been nice to learn how to advocate for myself and arts education.

14) How can fellow educators and community members best support arts education in Wyoming?

Become involved in advocacy. Participate in your community events. Go to a play, or an art gallery, or a concert. Talk to members in your community about your experiences, and why they were enriching or valuable.

California Casualty Grant Awarded For Music And Art!

Congratulations to CTEA member, Janice Lee. Janice is the proud recipient of a Music & Arts grant from California Casualty! Janice is a WEA/CTEA member at Alta Vista Elementary School. She is an art teacher, and she plans to use the grant to replace broken kiln shelves at her school. Pictured left to right: California Casualty Partner Relations Specialist, Rachel Quist, Janice Lee and the CTEA President, Joy Fawcett. A big thank you to California Casualty for great grant opportunities and sponsorships that enrich Wyoming schools and WEA member experiences.
The 2020 Budget Session: Priorities and Opportunities

The diverse group of education stakeholders in Wyoming recognize that the success of Wyoming’s students has significant and direct impacts on the potential overall success of the state. As dedicated education advocates, the Wyoming Education Association’s government relations staff recognize the importance of being able to inform and lobby legislators on behalf of WEA members by utilizing data-driven policy analysis and best practices from around the United States. Ensuring that every student has an equitable and adequate education and that teachers, administrators, and staff are satisfactorily compensated are of the utmost priority to the Wyoming Education Association’s legislative advocacy team.

The upcoming 2020 Budget Session is presenting potential challenges to what is and has been a highly equitable and effective education system.

2020 Legislative Priorities:
Educational Funding: A Brief Overview and Why it’s Important:
Wyoming’s economy has been highly dependent on the revenues generated from the mineral extraction industry. This dependence has resulted in substantial revenue shortfalls. As of the Fiscal year 2020, fully funding education in Wyoming will cost about $1.6 billion.

Wyoming is not unlike most other states in the U.S. in that education accounts for a significant portion of the state’s expenditures. However, where Wyoming differs is that, per the state’s constitution, education is a fundamental right guaranteed to all residents. Not only is education a fundamental right in the state, but it is also the obligation of the Legislature to fund education despite a lack of revenue. Wyoming’s constitution mandates that at no time is education to be funded below the mandatory minimum.

The state faces roughly a $250 million biennium revenue shortfall to fund education given current projections.

External Cost Adjustment (ECA): Wages, Inflation and High-Quality Educators

The Wyoming constitution mandates that an external cost adjustment is applied to the education funding model. The ECA is essentially an adjustment to account for inflation. Governor Gordon has recommended, and the Joint Appropriations Committee has approved, an ECA of $19 million per year, each year, through the biennium. This amount represents a sufficient external cost adjustment to stay in keeping with constitutionally-mandated education funding requirements; but, it is the absolute bare minimum allocation satisfying the constitutional mandate.

Recalibration: The Basket of Goods and How They’re Provided

As part of a Wyoming Supreme Court’s decision directing the Legislature to adequately and equitably fund Wyoming public education, the Legislature is required to evaluate the quality of education being offered to Wyoming K-12 students about every five years. This evaluation establishes what elements are necessary for high-quality education, and the Legislature is then constitutionally required to adequately fund all of the essential components to ensure that Wyoming students continue to receive a high-quality education. This process of identifying necessary components and their current cost is called “recalibration.”

The Legislature approved a recalibration study in 2005, 2010, and 2015. An additional recalibration
was conducted in 2017. Findings indicated that Wyoming’s school funding model was underfunding education by up to $90 million annually. Unfortunately, no changes were made as a result of the 2017 recalibration study.

A recalibration study will be conducted this year, with results likely available for consideration during the 2021 legislative session.

**Special Education Funding Cap**
In 2018, a substantial change was implemented regarding special education funding in Wyoming. The state legislature passed a law that capped special education funding which has resulted in a $325,000 deficit in special education funding. A bill sponsored by the Joint Education Committee, House Bill 46, has been proposed which will effectively remove the cap on special education funding so that the state will continue to reimburse special education at 100% of the cost and comply with the Wyoming Constitution.

**Get Involved: Shape Wyoming’s Education Policy**
Your Association works diligently throughout the session—both advocating for education before state leaders—and providing ample opportunity for WEA members to stay informed and to engage in the legislative process.

Beginning on February 10th, and continuing through the duration of the Budget Session, WEA members will receive daily legislative updates via email, detailing the status and impact of education-related bills.

[WEALegislativeInfo.com](http://WEALegislativeInfo.com) is also a fantastic resource for members wishing to stay informed and to help in shaping education policy. On this site, you will find a daily Bill Tracker, a Cyber Lobbying platform that makes it easier than ever to share your views and expertise with your legislators, and—new this year—WEA is pleased to introduce our new Legislative Affairs blog! There you will find real-time updates on happenings at the statehouse, and detailed bill breakdowns and analysis from the WEA Lobby Team.

The WEA Lobby Team looks forward to serving as an informed, influential advocate for education at the 2020 Budget Session. Ultimately, it’s essential to remember one thing: Actively engaged members are critical to legislative wins. Use the resources provided through your Association to stay informed, and to influence policymakers to make the best decisions for education in Wyoming!
WEA News had the opportunity to sit down with Wyoming Music Teacher of the Year awardee, WEA member Monica Huntington. Monica is a Pre-K-6 General Music Teacher at Arp Elementary in Cheyenne. Of her award, Huntington said, “It’s very humbling. I’m extremely honored to be selected out of all of the teachers in Wyoming. I really do feel like nothing great has ever been accomplished by oneself. I know that I have been fortunate to have amazing mentors and colleagues here in Cheyenne and the State of Wyoming; they’re just so good. They spur me on to be as good as I can be.”

Huntington emphasizes that students learn soft skills in her classroom that carry over into all aspects of their education and lives. “My goal as a teacher is not necessarily to have a bunch of kids who leave my program being incredible, virtuoso musicians, but to be well-rounded, good citizens,” she said. “Through what we do in the classroom, they learn a lot of non-musical skills through the venue of music. We work a lot on listening skills, and how to pick up cues, and find important information. It’s a different way to learn in the music room, and it clicks with some kids in a way that maybe it doesn’t in the traditional classroom environment.”

In addition to furthering their musical skills, students in Mrs. Huntington’s class benefit from a sense of community. “For some kids—especially those who are not really strong in academics or athletics—this gives them a place to belong,” said Huntington. “There are a lot of things about music education that I’m hoping to give my students that are not necessarily musical skills; they are life skills, and we just use the venue of music to explore those things.”

Huntington contends that the key to being an exemplary educator lies in a willingness to be a lifelong student. “Never stop learning. I think as soon as we decide that we know it all, we’re in trouble and in danger of losing our fire and losing our drive and our passion for what we do, and it’s a slippery slope at that point when we stop learning.” Huntington said. “Take as many classes as you can. Go to as many workshops as possible. Ask around. We have such amazing educators in this state, and they have such good ideas. We all can work together to be the best that we can be.”

“Education is a team effort, and we all play a part in the development of our kids no matter what we do in the school. So, we need a community to belong to that supports us. I’m proud to support educators in my state no matter what their subject or grade level. We all do it together. It’s a huge community and a great organization.”
You deserve to celebrate life, without the looming stress of student debt. Get a fresh start with NEA Member Benefits. You’ll have access to tools made to help members repay student loans, and resources to help navigate the forgiveness process. Which means you can focus on what’s ahead.

Prepare for your future at neamb.com/studentloandebt
Last fall, WEA member and 22-year educator, Troy Reichert, won second place in the 2019 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence, earning his high school skilled trades program $35,000 as part of $1 million awarded nationally.

Four years ago, Reichert—who teaches industrial technology at Guernsey-Sunrise Public High School in Guernsey—started a Trades class for which students are awarded credit at Eastern Wyoming College. “I wanted to get kids out of the classroom and into the community to teach them job skills in a real-world setting,” said Reichert.

Since the inception of his Trades class, Reichert has secured funding from several different sources, including the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), The Daniel’s Fund, and Home Depot. Reichert and his students use the money to complete various community service projects. Currently, they’re completing a full renovation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars building in Guernsey. “Veterans do so much in our community, so we wanted to do this for them,” said Reichert, “and, it’s a great way for the kids to learn job skills.”

CTE is important for every student. CTE is the best way to teach students and for students to learn,” said Reichert, “In my classroom, I build relationships with my students because I work right alongside them on the projects that we do.”

Reichert’s advice for students considering a career in skilled trades: “My advice is to go for it. Ask your Guidance Counselor. There are scholarships available and there are companies with apprenticeships, said Reichert. “Honestly, anybody—if they’re willing to work hard—can get a job in skilled trades.”

Reichert also shared with WEA News his advice for educators searching for funds and motivation to get special projects off of the ground: “To all of the teachers out there who are wishing they could find funding for their program—whether it’s CTE or anything else—get after it! Help the kids out. Tie it into your curriculum. There are grants and money available out there if you take the time to fill out the paperwork and follow through with it,” said Reichert. “What’s more important: an easy day at school or seeing your kids succeed in the future?”

The Guernsey-Sunrise High School students in Mr. Troy Reichert’s “Trades” Class began a journey with the Guernsey VFW Post 4471 in the spring of 2017. What started as a simple “what can we do for you” question posed by the class to the VFW, quickly turned into a quest to gain funding through educational grants to create a tie between the school, VFW, and community by remodeling the VFW building in Guernsey. Follow their progress on Facebook. Just search ‘G-S Vikings for Veterans’ on Facebook. Photo courtesy of WDE.
Governor Mark Gordon believes all Wyomingites should have a clear understanding of how taxpayer dollars are spent. With easy access to our state's budget, citizens can better understand the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the Great State of Wyoming.

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No RSVP necessary. Plus ones are welcome!
WEA-Retired By: Vicki Swenson

WEA plays an integral role in shaping education across Wyoming and WEA-Retired plays a unique part in those efforts. There are so many ways for active and retired members to be actively involved in our Association!

I encourage all WEA and WEA-R members to closely follow education legislation throughout this upcoming Budget Session and lobby your legislators. Now is the time to reach out to legislators. Form relationships with elected officials before education issues are addressed at the Capitol. WEA makes it easy to follow legislation and stay informed on legislative affairs. At wealegislativeinfo.com, you will find a Legislative Affairs blog that takes a deep-dive into various topics and bills, a daily bill tracker, updated each evening throughout the session and a cyber-lobbying platform that provides easy-to-understand, in-depth information on bills, and guides visitors through identifying local leaders and participating in coordinated letter-writing campaigns. As an educator, active or retired, you have a wealth of knowledge and a unique perspective; it’s imperative that you share this with legislators as we work together to shape policies that will impact Wyoming students for generations to come.

WEA-R is working with the Wyoming Coalition for a Healthy Retirement to get an inflation adjustment passed. It has been nearly 12 years since there were any increases to the Wyoming Retirement System. Although this effort is not an actual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), it would provide for a “13th check” to help those who have been long-retired. Watch for emails from WEA-R with more information as this legislation is drafted.

Please join other WEA and WEA-R members for SHAPE Wyoming, a grassroots lobbyist training that empowers regular citizens to engage with the Wyoming Legislature on the issues that matter to them and their communities. SHAPE is sponsored by Wyoming Education Association and the Equality State Policy Center. WEA offers admission to members free of charge. The training takes place at the Red Lion in Cheyenne on Sunday, February 23rd. On Monday, February 24th, participants are encouraged to take part in our Citizen Lobbying Day at the Capitol. There, you’ll engage with legislators and put your lobbying skills to the test.

To learn more about SHAPE and to register, please visit bit.ly/shapewy2020. WEA and WEA-R Members traveling 100+ miles roundtrip to attend are eligible for a complimentary double occupancy hotel room. To learn more and/or to book a room, please contact the WEA Communications Department at 1-800-660-6771 ext. 116 and ask for Amanda, or leave a message. You may also email Amanda at aturner@wyoea.org.

WEA Delegate Assembly and WEA-R’s Annual meeting takes place next month, March 27-29, at the Red Lion Hotel in Cheyenne. As Retired delegates we play an active role in the proceedings at DA. WEA-R’s Annual Meeting will be the morning of March 27, just prior to the start of DA. At our WEA-R Annual Meeting we will discuss what we accomplished in 2019, explore what we are currently working on, and make additional plans for the upcoming year. We will also prepare our annual PACE fundraising letter for mailing. Our work will continue during lunch caucus times. I would like to encourage all delegates to attend the WEA’s Candidate Forum where we will hear from candidates running for WEA President and Vice President! To learn more about opportunities for WEA-R members around DA, please email me at wyoea.r307@gmail.com.

As retired educators, we retire from our position, but need not retire from our profession. Together, active and retired members, can have a positive impact on Wyoming education!

Sincerely,

Vicki Swenson,

WEA-R President
VOTES ARE IN!

In November, the WEA general membership voted in favor of changing wording in the WEA constitution to align with language used by NEA; changing the word "student" to "aspiring educator". 80.31% of voters were in favor of the change. 19.69% were against.

The 2020 WEA Elections will be held April 6-April 20. Electronic ballots are sent via email. Learn more about candidacy declarations at runforwea.com.

GRADY HUTCHERSON
FOR
WEA PRESIDENT

We are the WEA! It is our collective voice that determines the future of our students and educational employees in the state of Wyoming.

Together we can and we will be successful!

gradyhutch@gmail.com

307.532.1731
Goede’s answer? A podcast.

Lance Goede is a professional, award-winning counselor. He works with students in a variety of capacities at Central Wyoming College, and now he’s reaching an audience throughout Fremont County and beyond through his new Podcast, Positively Mental.

As a whole, Wyoming lacks in mental health resources systemwide, Goede shared with WEA News. “Whether it’s school districts, whether it’s higher ed, whether it’s the community, anywhere you go in Wyoming, one of the challenges is accessing good health services and mental health services has a tendency to be the least available.”

Positively Mental tackles tough topics like veterans’ mental health and suicide prevention. “It’s especially of concern in Fremont County,” said Goede, “Fremont County is typically close to—if not always at the top of—suicide numbers and Wyoming is anywhere from first to third in the nation. It’s related to a lack of services.”

As Wyoming continues to combat staggeringly high suicide rates, Goede wants listeners to know that conversation and attention to detail are crucial. “It’s OK to talk about it. There’s sometimes a stigma about it in that talking about suicide will cause more incidents of suicide. That’s been proven by research to be false. The more we talk about it, the more the risk goes down.”

Goede also contends that simple attentiveness can help with intervention for at-risk children and young adults. “Change is typically a red flag, and struggling children don’t necessarily like to have these tough conversations, but they need to have them—driven by the adults who are paying attention.”

Goede also points out that—while there are mental health services available in every community in Wyoming and telehealth is improving access to mental health resources—adequate staffing of mental health professionals stands in the way of Wyoming students consistently receiving sufficient care. “Making sure that there is adequate staffing available is first and foremost,” said Goede. “When you’re in school eight hours each day, it’s basically a student’s job to be at school, and that’s where the services should be most available.”

Goede is enthusiastic about bringing information on mental health issues to podcast listeners. “My goal with Positively Mental is to deep-dive into mental health subjects and make them interesting and accessible for the typical person who wants to know more.”

Listen to Positively Mental on the 10Cast Network at 10cast.county10.com.
Delegates traveling 100+ miles to attend are eligible for a complimentary double occupancy hotel room and mileage reimbursement.

2020 Delegate Assembly
March 27-29
Cheyenne, WY | Red Lion Hotel

Shape WEA’s policy and platforms. Contact your local president to find out who is representing you at the 2020 Delegate Assembly. There are vacant delegate positions available at this time. Learn more at www.runforwea.com.

Enjoy a Texas Hold ‘Em tournament benefitting WEA-PACE, a dance, banquet, vendors, a live auction and more at WEA’s baseball-themed Delegate Assembly!

Featuring guest speaker, NEA Executive Committee member, Robert Rodriguez and training sessions around ESP, Early Career Educators, Diversity Training, Wyoming PBS Learning Media and more.

Visit runforwea.com or contact your local president to learn more!

WHAT IS WEA-PACE?

WEA PACE is the political arm of the Wyoming Education Association, endorsing pro-public education candidates with voluntary donations.

We endorse candidates who will protect safe and quality professional working conditions for all education employees, support due process rights for all education employees, continue support for the constitutional mandate for equitable and adequate funding, and support adequate funding for K-12 and community colleges.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.WYOE.A.ORG/WEA-PACE

WEA’s goal is for every member to contribute to PACE. No amount is too small. Payroll deduction is available in most school districts.
WEA member and CTEA Diversity Caucus founder, Danelle Moyte, alongside other volunteer educators, secured outside sponsorships to take 31 students to the 2019 Latina Youth Conference at the University of Wyoming.

“Knowing where you are and where you came from is very important, especially in today’s society, Moyte told WEA News. “Finding my true identity has been an amazing experience, and it has allowed me to be able to guide and help the girls see where they’re coming from.” The conference opened up with ice breakers and a banquet featuring keynote speaker, Attorney, Public Policy Expert and Advocate for Colorado’s abused and neglected children, Stephanie Villafuerte. The girls participated in age-appropriate workshops on Robotics Engineering, Latin Dance, Biochemistry Science in the Real World, Community Wellness, and Financial Literacy. “It was empowering to see all of these different women come together and focus on the fact that we are one,” shared high school Senior, Liliana Valdez. “It felt good to be there and to be represented with girls in my community and women that I don’t know, but I know that they are with me.”

“I appreciate the Association’s support,” said Moyte, that has given me the oomph to feel comfortable moving forward and know that I have an awesome Association backing me up. That’s just empowering. Why aren’t more people doing this? Being a voice for our students and putting yourself out there?”
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- Special Education (K-12)
- Special Education – Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-Kindergarten)

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“In a single phone call to CSC, I was convinced and moved my family to Chadron so I could pursue an administrative degree in secondary education. I most appreciated the experiences my CSC professors shared about their K-12 public school administration days as well as the experience my college peers shared. This collaboration created professional bonds that still last today, almost 20 years later.”

Jerry Mack
Chadron High School Principal

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CSC has also designated an individual to coordinate the college’s efforts to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Inquiries regarding Title IX may be directed to: Ted Tewahade, Title IX Coordinator, Chadron State College, 1000 Main St. Chadron, NE 69337, Telephone: 308-430-0980, Email: titleixcoordinator@csc.edu.
To engage membership in the political process and provide information about the current legislative landscape in advance of the 2020 Budget Session, the Albany County Education Association (ACEA) hosted a local Legislative Forum in January. Speaking at the forum were both Senator Chris Rothfuss (D) and Representative Dan Furphy (R). Rothfuss and Furphy addressed constituents, answering questions and providing information about everything from existing caps on transportation and special education funding, to this year’s recalculation study, and the importance of educators providing public testimony throughout the upcoming session.

“More educators need to become involved in the legislative process, and generally people don’t know how to do that,” said ACEA member Paige Gustafson, “so, when you have opportunities like these—where people aren’t put on the spot—and they can just listen and understand how the legislative process works and how to talk to local legislators, the better off we are as a state and as a community of educators.”

Senator Rothfuss shared with WEA News the importance of constituents communicating directly with legislators. “If we, as a state, want to maintain this excellence of education that we have right now,” said Rothfuss, “then that needs to be communicated to our legislators, and members of the WEA certainly can play a role in that.”

Education Support Professionals (ESP) from across the state gathered in Lander, in November, to participate in the WEA training Building an ESP Leadership Pipeline. Attendees were provided a stipend for participating and are now eligible to assist the Association with ESP organizing efforts across the state.

Over the past 18 months, WEA has put particular emphasis on developing programs and resources to best serve our ESP members.

“We were wonderfully surprised by the enthusiasm, interest, and expertise demonstrated by the participants,” said Northwest Region UniServ Director, Elise Robillard. “I’ve done many trainings with many members over the years, and this was by far the most engaged, enthusiastic, and purposeful group of trainees that I’ve ever worked with.”

ESP training in Lander:

Building an ESP Leadership Pipeline trainings will be made available regionally, as resources and capacity allow. If you’re interested in bringing this training to your region, contact your UniServ Director.
Q&A With ESP Evangeline Trevino-Linton

Eva Linton is an ELL Paraprofessional at Parkside and Southside Elementary in Powell, and one of only forty Education Support Professionals (ESP) across the nation to be accepted into the National Education Association ESP Leadership Institute (ESPLI). WEA had the chance to sit down with Eva, to ask her about her expectations and aspirations in advance of the institute.

1) What motivated you to apply for NEA's ESP Leadership Institute?

I love being involved with Powell Education Association and WEA. I've learned so much and made a lot of friends. I believe in the power of common goals and action. Both of my dads, and my grandfather were members of their unions and I always remember the community and family it created.

2) What are you hoping to take away from the experience?

Even though there are many ESP working with common goals in our state, we are so diverse and scattered. I’m hoping this experience will help me build a community for ESP in Powell and across Wyoming. We need our brother and sister bus drivers, who are the first faces that our kids see every day, to know how important they are. We need our custodians to feel that their needs are a priority. With a strong ESP base we can do it. We have to do it.

3) Why are ESPs so important to students' overall academic experience and achievement?

ESP help with academics, but there is so much more to learning than curriculum. When our students are fed, in a clean and safe environment they let down all of their walls and grow as people as well as students. Classrooms couldn’t run as smoothly without their paras. My own kids' kindergarten and first-grade paras are part of our family. They love my kids as much as I do.

4) Why are you a WEA member?

I have had great experiences with the unions that my family was involved with in Michigan. I was a union kid, it only made sense that I would continue to be part of a union as an adult. I mean—organizing and hard work are in my blood.

5) What does your continued involvement in WEA/NEA mean to you?

It means community. It means that when I have an issue, I have someone to talk to. It means that I have resources at the tips of my fingers. The people that I have met through WEA have become an important support group for me.

5) Anything else you'd like to add about the ESPLI?

I'm nervous! I have so many thing I want to learn. I'm extremely excited for our first training, I've already met some of the other ESPs and I can't wait to pick their brains.

![Image of Eva Trevino-Linton, second from the right, attending the New Educator Conference in Houston. 2019.](image-url)
Welcoming New Staff to WEA!

As a fourth-generation Wyoming native, Tate Mullen has strong ties to friends and family across the cowboy state. Tate was born in Cheyenne and raised in Casper, where he attended Natrona County High School and Casper Community College. Tate went on to Laramie Wyoming, where he received his master’s degree in political science, studying youth voter participation and mobilization. After graduating, Tate worked as a GED instructor at the Center for Adult Education in Loveland Colorado, where he also taught college preparatory math and English. Continuing his education, Tate attended the University of Colorado Denver, where he pursued his master’s in public administration and public policy. During this time, he worked as a policy and budget analyst for the Office of Budget and Management in Jefferson County, Colorado. Here he conducted policy analysis regarding the impacts of TABOR on the county’s service provision. Before returning home to Wyoming, Tate worked as a policy and research analyst for Kansas Action for Children in Topeka Kansas, where he collaborated with state legislators, national partner organizations, and other statewide non-profits on policies aimed at improving the lives of children and families across the state. Tate is thrilled to be back home and to be able to continue his work as an advocate for educators, children, and families across the state of Wyoming.

In his free time, Tate enjoys day trips to the mountains with his partner Jordyn and their two dogs, watching his teenage son play lacrosse, lifting weights, or just relaxing and bantering with friends and family over good food and drinks.

The Wyoming Education Association is pleased to welcome Felicia Raney to the WEA family!

Felicia will be serving as our new Southwest Region Uniserv Director. Felicia is a native of Ohio, a graduate of Miami University, and a proud mother of two grown boys. She is fresh from the classroom, having spent the last 22 years as a secondary language arts teacher. During her tenure, Felicia served on a myriad of curriculum and building leadership committees.

Early in her career, Felicia was encouraged by her local association’s leadership to become a building representative. Years later, she went on to become president of that association—negotiating contracts, advocating for pro-educational policies at the statehouse, and representing members in need of support. Though still adjusting to life outside of the classroom, Felicia is excited about her new home in Wyoming and grateful for the opportunity to represent members across the Southwest region.

As a former teacher, she knows the value of being a member of a strong local association. As a former local president, she knows the instrumental role that a UniServ Director plays in building stronger locals.

Welcome, Felicia!
Congratulations to AARP Wyoming’s Retired Educator of the Year 2019, Debbie Bovee!

Bovee retired after teaching for 38 years. Bovee began her career at Harmony School, a rural school outside of Laramie. She went on to teach in Guernsey, Torrington, and Casper, where she taught at Grant Elementary. During her career, Bovee taught every grade level in elementary school. In the last ten years of her career, Bovee worked with special education teachers to help improve instruction.

“Elementary students are never dull,” she remarks, “I remember a 5-year-old boy who was so excited to tell me he washed his coat in that funny looking sink in the boys’ bathroom, often called a urinal. He also was happy that there was a hook in the bathroom where he could hang his coat.”

During her teaching career, Bovee was active in the Wyoming Education Association, serving on the local board of each school at which she taught. She was also on the state board and was named the NFIE Teacher of the Year, by WEA. Bovee served as Vice President of WEA from 2010 - 2012.

Bovee is active in politics. She won a seat in the House of Representatives as a write-in candidate, assuming office in 2017. After leaving the Legislature, she was appointed to the State School Board by Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon. She currently serves on the board of Parents as Teachers, and chairs the Natrona County Democratic Party.

Congratulations, Debbie!
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Test your knowledge of these important legislative terms! Clues on the back cover. Answers can be found at: bit.ly/winter2020weacrosswordkey.
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WEA Legislative Affairs Crossword Puzzle Clues

Across:
1. Based on the state’s cost of living index.
6. The lower chamber.
8. Money generated by the lease or sale of these lands goes into the Common School Permanent Land Fund where it can be spent only on education.
15. Responsible for the administration & operation of the Wyoming Education Resource Block Grant Funding Model.
16. There are ? members of the Wyoming House of Representatives.
17. These committees study topics assigned by Management Council.
19. Known as the ECA, this $19 million dollars each year is intended to account for increased education costs due to inflation.
21. The period between sessions.
24. Refers to a cyclical economy, subject to peaks & valleys, because of a lack of overall diversity.
25. A maximum cap on the total dollars that the state can spend on special education.
27. The upper chamber.
28. The ? Wage Index. An economic model that attempts to take into consideration various amenities that theoretically impact people’s willingness to live in a particular community.
29. Mandatory, formalized state review, conducted every four years, of the costs associated with providing a quality education.
30. WEA members enjoy free access to this grassroots lobbying training February 23-24, 2020.

Down
2. An engaged WEA member. Someone willing to contact their legislator through wealegislativeinfo.com to lobby around key education issues.
3. WEA polling reveals this as the least favored method of raising revenue for Wyoming schools.
5. There are ------ members of the Wyoming Senate.
8. WEA polling reveals this as the most popular method of raising revenue for Wyoming schools.
9. Proposed method of raising revenue for schools by taxing a renewable resource (hint: the resource causes bad hair days).
12. Consists of five elected officials, this board makes decisions regarding the sale & development of school trust lands.
13. This is the primary method of funding schools used in most states.
14. A form of tax on larger businesses paying out-of-state taxes to corporate headquarters’ states (i.e. Walmart) that would generate—conservatively—$23 million for Wyoming schools.
15. Located at 200 W. 24th St. Cheyenne, WY 82001
18. The Wyoming State Legislature is a --------- or two-chamber legislature.
20. In this series of cases the Wyoming Supreme Court held that the legislature must fund education “adequately & equitably” & fund education before anything else.
22. There are this many permanent parallel committees in the Wyoming Senate & House of Representatives
23. Permanent parallel committees.
26. The 2020 Budget Session ends in what month?

Answers can be found at: bit.ly/winter2020weacrosswordkey.