



S.E.C.

*Solving Employee Concerns
through
Superintendent & WDEA Executive Committee Meetings*

The Washington District Education Association

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An affiliate of Arizona Education Association and National Education Association

AEA Hosts Teacher Working Conditions Survey Conference

Do you remember being asked to go to the computer lab with your fellow teachers to answer an online survey about working conditions? Maybe you remember receiving a letter from Governor Napolitano asking you to go online and fill out a survey? If you did, you were one of thousands of teachers across the state who wanted their voices heard about how they do their jobs.

Results from the survey were released in July of this year, with data collected from 32,000 certified classroom teachers, school counselors, and site administrators. Recently, public education stakeholders, including principals and teachers from more than 20 Arizona school districts came together to discuss results. The Washington Elementary School District sent two representatives to the conference, one teacher and one Human Resources representative. As with any survey, there are areas that our district exceeded in and areas that need work, but the important thing to remember is that we now have hard data that we can use to bring about positive changes.

Some of the highlights of the results are below:

The majority of Arizona educators (72%) say their school is a good place to work and learn and agree that leadership is critical to retaining quality teachers.

Survey results indicate that a large majority of respondents (69%) receive insufficient time to plan and collaborate with colleagues. Additionally, more than half (56%) say they cannot focus on teaching their kids without interruptions.

When asked which working condition matters most in promoting student learning, more educators identified empowerment and time than any other factors.

The data suggests that teachers want to play a role in classroom and school decisions to ensure they can be effective with their students. According to the data, however, 64% of educators say they are not playing a significant role in the decisions that ultimately impact student learning.

The survey results for the entire state, our district, and most of our schools are available online.

Go to www.aztwc.org.

Click on "2007 Results Now Available".

Click on Washington Elementary School District or your individual school.

Did You Know?

Ten Minute Meetings can be fun! Yes, they really can!

Are you frustrated that no one is attending your Ten Minute Meetings? Are you hesitant to hold those meetings because you are afraid no one will come? There's a reason that people hate going to meetings - most meetings are really boring and accomplish nothing. But it doesn't have to be that way. Here are a few simple tips for making your meetings memorable:

Do something! Yes, that's right - do something at your meetings. In fact, don't call a meeting unless there is something to do - pass on information, remind about upcoming events, reward achievements, or brainstorm ideas. Tell people ahead of time what you're going to do and ask them to come prepared. Then when the meeting begins, get down to business.

Encourage networking Ask participants about their current concerns and whether they need any help getting them solved. Use a few minutes at the end of every meeting to ask about Site Concerns. Meetings can be a good time to get these concerns out in the open and work together to solve them or take them to the next level.

Recognize and reward No matter how serious the discussion, you can turn any meeting into a feel-good session by taking a few moments to recognize those who've had a recent success - or even those who've just consistently given it their all. And the recognition will be that much more meaningful if you add some reward - even something as simple as a certificate to hang on their wall. Door prizes are always a great way to end a meeting too.



The Voice Continued



November Representative of the Month

Meet Cassandra Kowalczyk!

For many years, Cassandra was a teacher's assistant at Shaw Butte School and first became a member while she was a classified employee. A few years ago, Cassandra took the leap to get her teaching degree and certificate. She joined the WDEA as a certified member almost as soon as she graduated. Cassandra has just begun her first year as a Building Rep at Shaw Butte School. She started helping out before we came back from school by attending the AEA conference at the Wigwam this summer. She created beautiful centerpieces for all of the tables at the New Teacher Lunch sponsored by the WDEA at the beginning of the year, and managed to do so without spending more than ten dollars! She is incredibly creative and can always be counted on to make something look cute or interesting. Since she did such a wonderful job making the WDEA bulletin board at Shaw Butte so appealing, she was selected to help all building reps with their bulletin boards by making a presentation at the first Rep Council Meeting. She also helps put on Ten Minute Meetings and delivers "thank you" treats to those who attend. She can always be counted on to help out, especially to make something creative, at the last minute.

Thanks for all you do for members Cassandra!

Submitted by Sara Hester, WDEA Voice Editor

Call To Action!

As you may have heard, our Governing Board recently had a discussion about possibly changing the way our 301 money is distributed. Some members of the board are interested in using teacher attendance, both in school and PLC Wednesday attendance, as well as student test scores to determine how much of the 301 money each person gets.

At the November Rep. Council Meeting, Darrin Squire reported that the committee was asked to come up with a plan that possibly included these two elements. Site Reps were asked to attend the final committee meeting, which was held the last week of November. Some sites also reached out to all members to ensure that teacher voices were heard. Many teachers didn't think it was fair to change the rules in the middle of year, after contracts were signed.

The School Board will be meeting on December 13 at 7:00 to vote on the new plan. If at all possible, please show up to the meeting. The Governing Board needs to know how we feel about this issue. The only way to have your voice heard is to make your voice present!

Calendar

Dates:

December 3-7	Inclusive Schools Week
December 3	AEA Bargaining Training
December 5-6	District IBN Training
December 11	WDEA Holiday Party
December 13	Governing Board Meeting
December 22-January 7	No School!

If you would like more information on any of these events, please contact your Building Representative.



Notes from President Whalen

Please be sure that you review all of the material that comes to your email from Mindy Whalen. As your WDEA President, Mindy gets a lot of information about a lot of topics, often-times before almost anyone else gets the same information. Recently, she has sent out updates on the School Redistricting Committee, the Flores ELL Court battle, and possible Performance Pay changes.

If you ever have any questions about the information you receive, be sure to ask your Building Rep. or your Area Delegate on the WDEA Executive Board. If you don't know who your Building Rep. or Area Delegate is, check your WDEA Bulletin Board for the Responsibility Chart or email Mindy.

Always remember, the WDEA is only as strong as its members. If you have an issue or are concerned about things you hear, do something! When President Whalen or another member asks for your help, offer your time and your voice. We can only solve problems if we are informed and are willing to ask for what is right.