

More Evidence that HEA Supports Teachers in Their Efforts to Educate Highline Students!

Sparks Workshop For Teachers with 0-6 Years Experience

This year our Sparks training will take place on March 11-13 in Silverdale, Washington. The intent in providing this training is to introduce participants to the Association and provide pertinent training on topics that are of interest to them. They also have a little fun socializing and networking with other educators in Highline, as well as the Renton School District. The great news is that we already have over 50 educators and support personnel wishing to attend! Since there is so much interest, we will hold a lottery to select the Highline attendees. The first-come, first-served method will not serve us well in this instance because there have been varying methods of becoming aware of the opportunity. We will be contacting the "winners" sometime in January and provide more details for attendees at that time. Do not hesitate to invite newer teachers to put their name in for the lottery by contacting Lori Fleck at lfleck@washingtonea.org.

Members of the Executive Board to Attend Poverty Institute in Portland

At my request, Theresa Carlson, Rosemary Paresa, Jennifer Walsh, Patrick Lamb, Shawna Moore, James Conlon and I will attend a two-day institute on recognizing and impeding Generational Poverty in our schools and communities. With current statistics revealing a population of students where 61% are Free and Reduced Lunch recipients, we know that many of our Highline students and their families are struggling financially. My goal in sponsoring attendance to this conference is to "scout out" the possibility of supporting this work on a district-wide basis. Poverty is a huge piece of Cultural Competency and is a challenge for all Highline educators. It is my hope that discovering tools and strategies for helping students in poverty succeed and in becoming more aware how to break the links of the cycle of generational poverty, HEA can support your efforts to teach students who are impacted negatively by influences at home. Please stay tuned, we will report back to you and make a recommendation if there is strong support among your leadership team.

No Child Left Behind and State Identified Struggling Schools

There are more than a few schools in Highline which have been identified by one measure or another as being a "struggling school." As many of you know, most Highline schools are in various stages of "improvement" by state and federal identification standards. We have some schools in Step 5 of improvement which requires some (vague) form of restructuring. The vast majority of our schools are showing marked growth over time and efforts toward improved student performance are producing higher test scores (which continue to be the most important measure, in spite of efforts to deny it). Since the Federal guidelines in the NCLB act demand a steady upping of the benchmarks for success, our growth statistics are not enough to qualify for being classified as even satisfactory. Currently 5 schools, two middle schools (in Step 5) and three elementary schools (disappointing growth over time) are being identified as in need of increased support. It is our goal as Association leaders to ensure that this involvement is, in fact, more supportive than punitive. We are all becoming more and more aware that the pressure cooker is going full blast and the pervasive attitude is that ineffective teaching is the problem. Dr. Carla Jackson and the area directors are working with James and me by monitoring the guidelines together that are forthcoming from the State School Board and the Legislature. Know that we are working in concert with district personnel to guide the school improvement efforts. We are sharing our ideas for specific and targeted support of some of these schools.

District/Panasonic Partnership Work

A team of 6 educators and James Conlon accompanied district administrators to Orlando, Florida where the topics of Collaboration to Improve Student Learning, Struggling School Support, Professional Collaboration Time, and SWIMS (district wide goals set by the school board) were discussed and further defined. Work teams will continue to work on these issues during the school year.

Highline Bargaining Training and Dinner

Thanks to your recommendations for invitees to a bargaining training, we had 25 participants in attendance. Phil Becker, a long time UniServ Director and experienced trainer, came to Highline to give an overview of the bargaining process on November 19th. At the conclusion of the training 15 participants indicated an interest in serving on the Highline bargaining team or bargaining support team. Many of these folks are not building reps and as a result, we are getting more of our membership involved. The level of recent participation in this great organization is phenomenal! Our Association is growing! Also, thanks to the 36 of you who come to the Rep Training on November 10th. It is truly gratifying to see so many of you put so much of yourselves into the process of becoming a stronger, better informed organization.

Long/Short Form Evaluations

Many of you have alerted James and me that there has been a remarkable change in the placement of educators on long form for evaluation purposes this year. A Washington State Code requires that teachers be placed on the long form once every 4 years. Apparently Highline has been out of compliance in this regard for many years. In order to be in compliance, the Human Resources Department has advised principals to place more than the usual number of educators on long form. Many principals have notified their staff of these changes. Although this is disconcerting for some, in the vast majority of cases it is simply a matter of formality, not to mention more required work for principals and vice principals.