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President's Column



Hello!

As I write to you all, admittedly, later than usual, I am looking out at my rhododendron bush, our Washington state flower, definitely a sign of springtime in Washington. As often happens spring brings flowers, longer

days, and a renewed sense of hope. I am especially feeling that this year, not only because we have an amazing new WERA Board, with an incredible Washingtonian stepping into the role of WERA Board President (I'll get to all of that later), but also because despite high recent covid numbers, the days of total lockdown, home school, and isolation, seem to be firmly behind us. We are even talking about the real possibility of bringing people together in-person for our annual winter conference!

Before we spring forward into the new and exciting year ahead though, I want to take a moment to reflect on where we have been this past year and share your WERA Board's approach to ensuring the fulfillment of our mission, while managing unprecedented constraints.

Many of our fellow colleagues- educators, systems leaders, and administrators, shared that 2020-21 was their most challenging year in education. They then shared that 2021-22 was harder. The Pandemic uncovered many longstanding practices within education that are not helpful. As Carla Sanotini and Susan Enfield shared in their Panel Keynote at our 2022 Virtual Summit, *Responding to Change: Moving Forward with Intentionality and Purpose*, the first thought of many superintends after students were sent home in March 2020 was how will my students have access to food, and the second thought was how will they have access to internet. Social and emotional well-being and academic progress did not make it into the top two concerns. This reality makes us look hard at the inequities that exist across our state, and within our education system, the load we are asking our educators to manage. We learned a lot at our Virtual Summit and we hope you did as well.

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WERA has been an amazing educational hub for Washington state educators to come together annually and dig into education related research, trends, and of course assessment and evaluation. Our initial audience, our District Assessment Coordinators (DACs), have always been and remain a critical core of our membership. We even have Brian Rick, who exits the Board this year and joins the ranks WERA Board Past Presidents, continuing to lead our DAC Special Interest Group (SIG) to prove it! Additionally, the WERA partnership with OSPI, critical to WERA's inception, remains strong. In fact, your new WERA Board president, Andrea Cobb, currently a Senior Program Office at the Gates Foundation, was the Executive Director of the Center for Improvement of Student Learning at OSPI. She is excited to collaborate again with our colleagues in Olympia. This tight bond will be needed as we navigate new ways to assess student growth following two years where this was not possible.

While there may still be Cascade mountains to climb ahead, I think maybe we have made it over Mount Rainier, and this brings me hope. In 1892, before they had the right to vote, Washington women selected the coast rhododendron as the state flower. 130 years later, your WERA Board will be filled with amazing women from across the state who have poured their heart and soul into education. We will be joined by none other than Paul Stern, a WERA stalwart, serving as our Executive Secretary. I am honored to be among these amazing educators. Please read more about this dedicated group below and enjoy a short message from your incoming WERA Board President. I hope that you will join us for the 2022 – 2023 school year as we create a new way forward.

In Service,
Molly Branson Thayer



The Standard Deviation

Newsletter of the Washington Educational Research Association (WERA)

June 2022

2022 – 2023 WERA Board

Congratulations to new WERA Board members.

The WERA Board is welcoming several new board members for the 2022-23 program year. Five of the nine board members will be new.

Through the election held earlier this month, we have Almai Malit moving from a member-at-large to be the next President-Elect. Shelby Cooley (Seattle Public Schools) and Stephanie Thomas (Mt. Vernon School District) were elected to three year terms, replacing Bill Ash and Brian Gabele. Also leaving the board is past-president Brian Rick. We would like to thank them for their service to WERA.

In addition to the election, we had two board members recently resign. Brandon Lagerquist and LaWonda Smith-Marshall both needed to leave the WERA Board. As provided in the WERA constitution, the Board appointed Andrea Cobb as Board President next year. The Board also appointed Bonnie Nelson (Education Research Data Center) to fill the final two years of Andrea's term; Carrie LaRoy (Walla Walla Public Schools) to fill the final two years of Almai's term; and Tammie Schrader (ESD 101) to fill the final year of LaWonda's term.

A Message from the 2022-2023 WERA Board President

Dear Colleagues,

I'm excited to kick off the year as your next WERA president. It is an honor to serve in this way. I'm looking forward to working with you and the board to co-develop an informative, engaging and inclusive calendar of networking and learning opportunities for our community.

I come to this role after having served three years on the WERA board, having worked nearly two decades in K-12 education, and having served six years on the Tacoma Public School District's board of directors.

I know that the last three years have been challenging in more ways than any of us care to list, but as we begin to lift our heads above water, it's my hope that WERA provides you with access to professional learning opportunities that help you and your teams emerge more equipped to use data and evidence (of all kinds) to develop and implement strategies that help your students thrive.

As you wrap up the school year and begin to think about your school or district's strategic priorities for the fall, please don't hesitate to contact us and share your ideas about how we can work together to move forward.

In partnership,

Andrea Cobb



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Championing Student Success (CSS)

Former WERA Presidents Bob Silverman and Michael Power have created a new non-profit foundation Championing Students' Success (CSS) to encourage Washington public elementary school teachers and staff working in schools that have been under-resourced, and support students that are furthest from educational justice. CSS will provide small grants in partnership with designated schools across the state. Bob and Michael see this as a small way to give back for all they gained from long careers in public education.

Two elementary schools in Pierce County were recently selected to receive \$2,000 cash awards – Naches Trail Elementary School in the Bethel School District and Northeast Tacoma Elementary School in the Tacoma School District. Both Naches Trail and Northeast Tacoma were recognized by the Washington State Recognition Program for making excellent progress in helping all students reach their full academic potential. CSS selected these schools to receive the Foundation's initial awards after a rigorous review process of all elementary schools in Pierce County serving diverse populations. The Board of CSS views these grants as a way to thank the teachers for the work they are doing and to encourage them to continue with their efforts. In future years schools in other districts may be included in the awards.

For more information about Championing Students' Success or to support their work, go to www.css-wa.org.

For more information on the Washington State Recognition Program, go to <https://www.sbe.wa.gov/news/state-board-education-announces-new-state-school-recognition-system>.

DAC Network and Data Viz Meetings

Save the date!

DAC Network and Data Viz SIG Meetings

August 5, 2022 from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm

Hold the date now for the kickoff of your 2022-23 school year, the DAC Network and Data Viz Special Interest Group meeting! We'll provide remote access to this meeting with Zoom though you may want to consider connecting with your neighbors regionally or at your ESD to create a hybrid meeting space. Our friends from OSPI Assessment and Student Information will join us and they promise we'll have no SBA/WCAS testing this fall!

Tentative plans are for the DAC session from 8:30 – 10:30, take a break, and then move to the Data Viz session. These meetings are intended for Washington's District Assessment Coordinator Network and the Data Viz Special Interest Groups supported by WERA. The meeting is open to all interested educators who support the work of district assessment coordination and data visualization. The new membership year for WERA begins on September 1, so look for more information about joining WERA in August.

Call for Papers for the WERA Educational Journal (WEJ) Submissions Due by August 1, 2022

2023 Issue Theme: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Teaching and Learning

DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) work is a critical concern for schools and districts within the Pacific Northwest region and beyond. Districts have increasingly looked to DEI efforts in order to more adequately support and retain a diverse teaching force in an effort to better support the rich diversity of students and families in public education systems throughout the Pacific Northwest.

For this issue, we encourage educators from all levels of education in the Pacific Northwest to share their experiences with DEI initiatives, professional learning, impacts, successes, and challenges. This work could include, for example, district efforts to support diverse populations, teacher education program initiatives to nurture and support diverse teacher candidates, and state-level data, research, and funding efforts to support regional DEI professional development for K-12 administrators, teachers, and staff.

We welcome a variety of submissions, including:

- Research studies on DEI work
- Practitioner pieces describing concepts and ideas in practice
- Essays providing perspective on salient issues pertaining to DEI concepts and initiatives

In addition to the DEI issue theme, *WEJ* is a collection of academic papers, professional reports, book reviews, and other articles and summaries of general significance and interest to the Pacific Northwest education research and practitioner community. Topics in *WEJ* cover a wide range of areas of educational research and related disciplines. These include but are not limited to issues related to the topics listed below:

- COVID-related educational challenges
- Early childhood education
- Curriculum and instruction
- State and national standards
- Professional development
- Special populations (e.g., gifted, ELLs, students with disabilities)
- Assessments and their relationship with other variables
- Early warning indicators
- Social and emotional issues
- School and district effectiveness
- Teacher and principal evaluation
- Education finance and policy
- Educational technology
- Educational leadership
- Remote learning

We encourage the submission of condensed versions of dissertations and theses that are reader-friendly. School and district practitioners are encouraged to write for *WEJ*. Manuscripts for the 2023 issue are due August 1, 2022. For information about the *WEJ* and its submissions, see the Submission Guidelines posted on the WERA website. If you have questions about the process or about possible submissions, email smithant@uw.edu.

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