Hi GEA Members! Here we are again, at the start of a fresh new school year, so full of possibilities. I have the privilege of starting off each year at the District’s New Teacher Orientation, where GEA hosts a lunch for newly hired educators. There is so much excitement in that group. Thanks to everyone who helped out at the lunch, and to all our volunteer building reps who give of their time all year. I hope you will take a moment this fall to give your GEA building rep a pat on the back for representing your school.

In this issue: On page 2 you’ll find an overview of the governing bodies of the GEA, UEA, and NEA. At every level, your Association is managed by teachers elected by you—fellow teachers you can contact with your questions and concerns. Page 5 has more ‘in depth’ information about the NEA summer meeting and representative assembly; it’s part of the “what I did this summer” essay to start the year.

The work that Granite District is doing to ensure equity for our students is described on page 3. Your Association works closely with the district to support all of our students.

Page 4 has an article on the Utah legislature’s tax reform task force, AKA the “tax force.” Because the decisions made by the legislature on this topic could affect education funding, we hope you are following this debate, and letting your legislators know that you value funding for public schools.

The ‘AdvoCat’ column on page 7 is a reminder about how to change lanes on the salary schedule. GEA protects steps and lanes every year at the bargaining table; make sure you are getting the most from the salary schedule. The article includes advice about getting ‘prior approval’ for trainings, so you are able to validate lane-change credit.

My schedule will be the same this year: in the morning, I will be teaching at Woodstock Elementary, but in the afternoon I can be reached at the GEA office. The phone here is 801-266-4411, and I receive email at mike.mcdonough@myuea.org.

Let’s raise a glass to the coming year: This year, may you see in each student something that will make you smile. May you have the time and resources you need to do the best that you can do. May you be energized and inspired by the challenge. May you look back on the day and know you made a difference. May you hear a “thank you” today. And if no one else has said it, I will: thank you for everything you do for public schools, for our profession, and for the students in your care.
GEA/UEA/NEA: Professional Democratic Process

Every spring, hundreds of delegates from around the state of Utah gather on a Saturday morning in a school auditorium somewhere in Utah. These teachers are part of the Utah Education Association’s (UEA) ‘House of Delegates,’ the highest governing body in the UEA governance structure. The UEA Board meets once a month to give UEA staff direction on the day-to-day operations, and make decisions as things come up during the year, but it is the UEA House of Delegates that approves the UEA Budget, membership dues, state legislative priorities, and UEA’s resolutions. When we say “UEA believes” in something, it has been voted on by this group of delegates. Statewide delegates are elected by UEA members working in school buildings throughout the state. When you elect someone to be your GEA building representative, you really are electing them to represent you at the local (GEA) and state (UEA) level.

Breaking down this democratic process even further, GEA has a monthly meeting with representatives (ARs) from every single school building and worksite in Granite which has employees represented under the GEA/GSD professional agreement. GEA ARs are instrumental in providing feedback and direction to the GEA Board of Directors, and to the GEA UniServ Office staff. ARs vote to approve the GEA local budget once a year. They are the voice of GEA membership to a local association that negotiates your contract with the District.

In addition to the local (GEA) and the state level (UEA), there is an association at the national level to which you belong – the National Education Association (NEA). We are very well represented at the national level: the president of the NEA is Granite’s own Lily Eskelsen Garcia, who used to teach at Orchard Elementary. She and the other executive officers of the NEA are elected at the summer NEA Representative Assembly by teachers from around the country who have been elected by their local association membership to be delegates to the summer meeting. (For a more in-depth look at the NEA summer meeting, see page 5.)

As a member, by voting in the GEA and UEA elections, you are selecting teachers to represent you at every level of the Association:

- Sometimes you have a local concern, like salary, benefits, or a district policy.
- Sometimes you have a state concern, such as a state law or the Utah education budget.
- Sometimes you have a national concern, like the federal ‘Every Student Succeeds Act’ or concerns with the secretary of education.

At every level, you have an association member representing your views, and amplifying your voice. You are the NEA; you are the UEA; and you are GEA. Together, we are the largest professional employee organization focused on building and protecting the rights for every child receive a strong public education and for every school professional to have equitable pay, support, resources, and respect for the role we plan in strengthening our nation’s democratic process.
Kudos to Granite School District (District) for planning an engaging Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) “Boot Camp” for administrators. This summer, several sessions were planned to guide administrators through the complexities of racial and opportunity equity for all students, the importance of being trauma-informed educators, and safety at school for LGBTQ students and educators. These were reflective days where personal privilege was unpacked and acknowledged; the first step to creating “equity literacy” in district schools.

Keynote speaker, Paul Gorski, Founder at Equity Literacy Institute and EdChange and author of several books, including “Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap” (2013) set the tone for the event by sharing his research on what it means to be equity literate as an educator and the necessity for every public school employee to internalize implicit racial and socio-economic bias (both conscious and unconscious) affecting classrooms and students.

Charlene Lui, Director of Educational Equity and Judy Peterson, Director of College & Career Readiness for the District facilitated the two day event.

Doug Larson, Director of Policy and Legal Services for Granite School District reviewed with administrators the District “checklist” for investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation complaints from students and/or staff.

Tami Curtis, School Counselor with the Washington County School District was a guest speaker on “Resilience: Becoming Trauma Informed.” Curtis focused on the biology of stress, and the effect continual adversity and trauma will create in a child’s developing brain. One of the national research gurus on the biology of stress and trauma, Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk has written a very good book on this topic, “The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.”

“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the single most important aspect of mental health: Safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”

Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD

Recommended reading.

Bonnie Owens, Afterschool Site Coordinator with Promise South Salt Lake, shared with administrators the trauma inflicted on LGBTQ students in schools when name-calling and discrimination goes unchecked. Owens shared the “2017 State Snapshot” on school climate in Utah, published by GLSEN (www.glsen.org).

All of this excellent information was rounded out by a deep dive into the results of the 2018-19 Equity Pathways Report for Granite School District. The report is based on a survey created by Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) and completed by 8,874 Granite students and 448 Granite staff members. Responses to questions regarding college and career readiness and equity provided interesting highlights:

⇒ 80% of Granite students surveyed expressed the desire to obtain a two-year, four-year, or advanced college degree.

⇒ 63% of Granite staff members surveyed said they are “confident” or “very confident” that they have the instructional strategies they need to support the academic success of students of color and low-income students.

⇒ Although college and career aspirations are high across almost all students, disparities exist in college degree attainment. Compared to 42% of White and 61% of Asian students, only 23% of African American and 15% of Latinx students aged 25-29 have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Peterson strongly encouraged administrators to take time to reflectively review the survey results in order to determine how best to engage teachers and students in addressing social-emotional curriculum in the classroom, appropriate rigor in AP and IB courses, and addressing any bias that may be hindering the success of students of color in the classroom.

Well done, Granite School District.
During the latter part of the 2019 Utah Legislative Session, a move was made to solve the problem of slow growth in statewide revenues. Legislators were proposing tax reform that would effect public education funding and changes to the state constitution. Not something to hammer out in a few days. The idea was placed on hold, and a “Tax Restructuring and Equalization Task Force” was formed to study state and local revenue systems (HB 495).

The UEA Legislative Team monitored this process closely, why? Public education funding depends on tax revenues, and Utah already is reported to be last in the nation for funding per pupil spending. Local school districts in Utah are forced to endure a pattern of “besting” one another in teacher salary and benefits in order to fill classroom vacancies. The Wasatch Front has the luxury of higher property tax, but rural districts are caught in a squeeze with far less funding available to attract and retain teachers.

All of this stems from the lack of appropriate long-term funding for public schools in Utah. UEA has issued a white paper on the Utah State Tax Restructuring and Equalization which is worth a read (even if you have to page down a bit, passing the list of scheduled tax reform town hall meetings).

As always, individual educator stories holds the most sway with elected leaders. We continually hear from legislators that we need to encourage individuals to contact them. Your professional association (NEA/UEA/GEA) will provide you with information and talking points, and you will need to internalize the information and discover how proposed legislation will affect you, your classroom, and your students.

While we (the larger “we”, the teaching profession) supports review of local and state tax policy, we want to ensure that the solution found will:

1. Grow public education investments in student success. Our students need secure, sustainable and growing education revenue sources. We must safeguard resources available for public education as provided by the Utah constitutional guarantee directing income tax to education.

2. Provide equitable resources for ALL students to learn and thrive. All students, regardless of zip code, deserve learning opportunities in safe schools, classes small enough for one-on-one attention and up-to-date learning materials. Students cannot learn when they are hungry, stressed, or in pain. Families in need should be provided support services like nutrition, counseling, and heath care.

3. Allow the state to attract and retain qualified teachers and other school employees. We support teaching as a sustainable profession. We must ensure that every educator has the resources, mentoring and support they need to ensure student success. Resources must be provided to address stress factors driving teachers from the profession, i.e. large class sizes, lack of classroom support (counselors, paraeducators, substitutes), increasing student social, emotional and behavior issues, and insufficient mentoring for new educators.

(Retrieved from: UEA’s “Our Message, Your Story”).

So what’s your story? How does the continual loss of public education funding (remember, Utah is LAST IN THE NATION for funding per pupil) affect your needs as an educator? How does it affect your students? Your profession?

Let your elected leaders know that in order for you to support any revised tax structure, WE need guarantees that the solution is not just a shell-game to move revenue from one fund to another, but a true study of how Utah may better support our children and dedicated educators by strengthening public education through long-term funding increases.
The annual meeting of the National Education Association, and the NEA Representative Assembly (RA), was held during the first week of July in Houston, Texas. The Utah delegation this year included 11 GEA members. Each morning, we met as a Utah Caucus, before we went to the convention center to join a group of nearly 10,000 teachers from across the nation. There, we discussed and voted on the business of the NEA, including the plan and budget for the coming year.

A highlight of this year’s RA was the NEA #StrongPublicSchools U.S. presidential candidate forum. Ten presidential hopefuls made their case to the delegates (and viewers nationwide who watched the forum via livestream). They fielded questions from NEA members on education funding and other education policy issues. We were most impressed by the fact that the candidates really value the concerns of educators. For video from this event, visit https://educationvotes.nea.org/presidential-2020/.

This year we amended the NEA Constitution and Bylaws to create a “community ally” category of membership. This will allow friends and family of NEA members to support our work of advocating for public education. We also elected two members to the NEA Executive Committee, Robert V. Rodriguez of California and Christine Sampson-Clark of New Jersey. Both work in special education.

"The NEA RA was a marathon of inspiring debate between passionate educators. My personal favorite was networking with special educators from other states. Besides being more informed, I learned lessons I’ll use in teaching, negotiations, and supporting GEA and Granite district. What an awesome time."

—Taylor Layton, GEA Delegate and educator at Wilson Elementary

We heard inspirational speeches from officers of the NEA, including NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, a GEA member who began her teaching career at Orchard Elementary, and now leads the largest labor union in America. We also heard from guests, including 2019 National Teacher of the Year, Rodney Robinson, who teaches social studies at a school inside the Richmond Juvenile Detention Center in Richmond, Virginia. For more coverage of these speeches, and the business of the RA, see https://ra.nea.org/.

Next summer’s NEA RA will be held in Atlanta, Georgia and will be the last one presided over by Lily as president. One of the responsibilities for next year’s delegates will be to elect her successor. We will elect delegates to the NEA RA as part of our GEA elections this fall.

Many thanks to the following GEA member-delegates for taking time to attend the RA this summer: Mike McDonough, Barbara Antonetti, Taylor Layton, Katie Anderton, Kim Cretsinger, Adele Genoves, and David Page; GEA members who attended the RA as UEA state delegates: Michele Jones, Caren Burns, Mindy Layton, and Heidi Jensen; and student members who attended as UEA Aspiring Educator Delegates, C.J. Gebhardt and Desiree Page.
Healthy Lifestyles: Granite District Wellness Clinic

Who can use the Wellness Center?
The Wellness Center is open to all contract employees, retirees (Pre-Medicare), and dependents age 2 or older who are enrolled in one of the District’s medical plans.

What services are offered?
Services at the Wellness Center include comprehensive primary care, preventive exams and physicals, acute care, wellness coaching, biometric screenings, behavioral health counseling, lab services, condition management, vaccinations and immunizations, specialist referrals and care coordination, and medication dispensing.

How much does it cost to utilize the Wellness Center?
All services provided are free of charge (e.g., office visits, procedures, labs, medication dispensing, counseling services). If you need additional services provided at other healthcare facilities, standard charges will apply based on the structure of your medical benefits.

How do I make an appointment?
Schedule directly at www.mypremisehealth.com or call the center at 801-964-WELL (9355).

Do I need to bring an insurance card or ID to my appointment?
Yes, please be prepared to show your insurance card and valid form of personal ID (such as a driver’s license) for identity verification.

Schedule an Appointment:
Download the My Premise Health app or visit mypremisehealth.com or call 801-964-WELL (9355)

Address:
4163 S. 3200 West
West Valley City, UT 84119

Hours of Operation:
Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Saturday, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Frequently Asked Questions:

GEA Members Speak Out

“I am a new teacher and I am one of the many new teachers who have started questioning if this is really the right career for me. People come into education because they care about the future of kids. But when you are placed into classrooms with 37+ kids, you soon realize that you really can’t do much to impact the children you hope to because your time is consumed in trivial tasks required when classes are so huge. Class size matters. It seems time and time again that Utah is choosing big business over teachers and over children’s education. The consequences are, teachers are leaving and children miss educational opportunities.” —Andrew Stimpson Gee

(Andrew resigned from teaching secondary students at the end of the 2018-19 school year. The pressure is real.)
Dear AdvoCat,
I want to earn more money as a teacher in Granite School District. How do I go about moving to an advanced lane on the salary schedule?
Signed: Lifetime Learner

Dear Learner,
“Con-cat-ulations” on being a lifetime learner! GEA has negotiated a great salary schedule which allows educators to increase their annual salary through additional validated university credits.

Teachers who personally pay for additional graduate studies benefit through increased pay by moving through the lanes. (BA + 20, BA + 40, MA, MA + 20, MA + 40, Doctorate). With every 20 semester credits you receive from an accredited university, you will receive a salary adjustment (increase). Cool, right?!

Basically, college credit counts toward a lane change, as does in-service credits through the Utah State Board of Education. BUT—and I need you to focus all of your cat-senses on this—before signing up for a professional learning activity, you must submit for prior approval from the district HR department. If you don’t, then the credits may not count toward your lane change and you will be angrier than a cat on a hot tin roof! The prior approval form for Granite District in-service lane change credit can be found on the Granite School District website. For lane advancement on the salary schedule, you’ll find all the information you need here. Once you’ve completed the form(s), turn them in to the HR department.

The process can be complicated, but you’ll find direction from the links above, as well as the contractual agreement (see pages 51-52). You should also contact the purr-fectly supportive and knowledgeable HR associate directors:

**Elementary:**
Patrick Flanagan: 385-646-4160
PFlanagan@graniteschools.org

**Secondary:**
Chris Judd: 385-646-4379
CJudd@graniteschool.org

Good luck with future learning! You are the cat’s pajamas!

Dear AdvoCat,
I think I’m going to do it—this is the year I will finally retire from Granite District after many, many years of teaching. Who do I contact at the District to start the retirement process?
Signed: I See a Beach in My Future

Dear Beachcomber,
Just thinking about your upcoming retirement makes me purr loudly and drool! There are a few steps you need to undertake and timelines to be aware of in order to have all your paperwork in place before you hit the beach.

First, I suggest you contact Doug Wagstaff at the District HR office: (385) 645-4344. Call and make an appointment to meet with Wagstaff and review all the retirement benefits you will receive and timelines you’ll need to adhere to before you make a formal announcement. He is great to explain the many Granite District Early Retirement benefits you will potentially receive when you officially retire through the Utah Retirement System.

Two important dates to remember; if you choose to retire at the first semester break, you will need to have your volunteer retirement paperwork in to the District by October 1, 2019; if you work the entire school year, then you’ll need to submit your signed paperwork by February 1, 2020.

Good luck with this momentous year in your career!
**Gaze Into Your Retirement Future**

Use **URS Calculators** to estimate the three pieces of your retirement.

- **Pension**
  - Estimate your monthly benefit
  - Estimate the cost of purchasing service credit
  - Estimate tax withholding

- **Savings Plans**
  - Estimate your future balance
  - Calculate your payment if you take a 401(k) or 457 loan

- **Social Security**
  - Estimate your benefit

[Website Link: www.urs.org/calculators]

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We also invite you to check out our website: [WWW.GEA-UT.ORG](http://WWW.GEA-UT.ORG)

Follow us on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/GEA_Utah) | Like us on [Facebook](http://facebook.com/GEA_Utah)

Our page is: GEA