GRANITE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The GEA Observer

September 2020

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President's Reflections

Dear GEA members,

I know that this is the roughest start to a school year that any of us have experienced in our careers. "Because of Covid 19" is the starter for each of the following sentences: ...we are planning twice the lessons. ...we are cleaning when we wish we were teaching. ...we are going home thinking it's been a long week, and it's still Monday. ...we are hoping that everyone simply makes it through each week without getting sick.

Here at the GEA office, we are gathering all those concerns, and we are continually communicating them to the district. We are meeting frequently with folks at the district office, and talking about the special difficulties of this year, and proposing changes. Some of the changes don't happen, and some of them do, and some of them help, and some of them don't help, and we try again. I wish I could tell you we could fix it all. I can't promise that. But I promise we will keep listening, and keep talking to the district about concerns, and never stop trying.

Meanwhile, we all need to give one another a little grace. I ask for your patience as we hack our way through this uncharted jungle. We ask that principals cut teachers some slack as we all figure out what needs to happen, and we do as much of that as possible. We ask the district to ask parents for patience as we all figure this out together.

And, maybe most of all, I hope that you will give yourselves a little grace, and cut yourselves a little slack. We are in this profession because we give a damn, and that makes it even harder for us to stop work when it is time to go home. This year, we need to say, 'It's not the best lesson I've ever done, but it will do. It's good enough.' Take care of yourself. Your students need you to stick around, and your colleagues need you to stick around, and nobody benefits if you burn yourself out.

In this issue, please read about the elections, (both US and GEA), information from AdvoCats on COVID-19, GEA superstars, and other valuable information.

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

I am so grateful to belong to this profession with all of you. Thank you for everything you do for public schools, for our profession, and for the students in your care.

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Dates to Remember:

GSD Insurance Open Enrollment: Oct. 5-20 (see flyer, pg. 9)

"Retirement: What's Your Plan" seminar, Oct. 6—5:00-6:30 (see flyer, pg. 8)

GSD School Board Meeting: Oct. 6 —7:00 p.m.

GEA Board Zoom Meeting: Wed. October 7—4:45 pm.

GEA AR Zoom Meeting: Wed., Oct. 14—4:30 p.m.

HIPPA/FERPA/Quarantine? It's Complicated

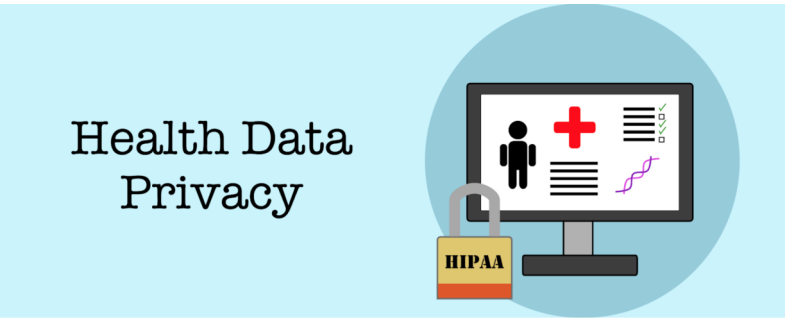
Since students arrived to classrooms on August 24, administration, teachers, and students have questioned what will happen if someone tests positive for COVID-19. The answer is complicated.

According to Utah's public health laws, a person's positive COVID-19 test results must be reported to the public health department by the doctor or the testing provider.

A person's test results are **considered private health information**, therefore, must be kept confidential under what is known as "HIPPA" (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996).

Each school building should have a "person of contact' or POC who receives calls from the health department when an employee receives a positive COVID-19 test. (The POC is likely the school principal.) The POC must maintain the confidentiality of the person who has tested positive, while notifying the health department of anyone (students, teachers or staff) who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and/or may have been within 6 ft of the person, for more than 15 minutes (with or without a mask) within the last few days.

The health department then notifies people on the POC list regarding possible exposure and the need to quarantine and/or be tested. It's likely, as a school employee, if you were not personally near the person who has tested positive or is quarantined, that you will not be aware of the event. This causes frustration with employees who feel as though this is a lack of transparency and may put them in harms way.



Similar health privacy laws are there to protect students. One that most are aware of is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA. This is a federal law that protects the privacy of a student's education records. If the quarantine or isolation of a student is deemed necessary, the POC needs to be extremely careful not to disclose any information that may identify the student personally.

So, what information CAN a school share when someone tests positive for COVID-19? The school's POC may disclose that someone in the school community has tested positive as long as the facts shared do not identify the person involved. Principals have been informed about the above privacy laws, and are trying to abide by the law while protecting students and employees. If you feel as though the principal has lacked transparency regarding COVID-19 quarantines or isolations, it's likely the principal is erring on the side of the person's privacy. It will take some time to get the reporting system running in a way that is consistent and informative to everyone. The Granite District's efforts to post a **dashboard of positive COVID-19 cases on their webpage** is a step in the right direction.

Information for this article comes from the USBE's **COVID-19 School Manual**. This manual offers important information regarding COVID-19 and how it affects school level decisions.

Granite District also has a COVID-19 information page on it's **website** which is comprehensive and helpful.

GEA will continue to answer individual concerns as we receive them through phone or email to the UniServ office. Keep us on speed dial as we all navigate this chaotic and anxious time.

GEA's AR of the Year Awards 2019-20

So much was happening from March 2020 to the end of the school year, GEA's pinnacle celebration was left without its proper due.

GEA has amazing GEA building representatives who, time and time again, have volunteered for events, local advocacy, and to be the point person for information in their schools. Each year GEA leaders review the work of all of our volunteers and determine those who rose above the minimum call to action to represent teachers in their buildings.

GEA's AR of the Year for 2019-20:

Jared Newbold, teacher of 4th grade students at Twin Peaks Elementary.

1st Runner-up JoAnne Brown, Science, Olympus High School

2nd Runner-up Felicia Walton, teacher of 3rd/4th graders at Arcadia Elementary

3rd Runner-up Lizzie Jolley, teacher of 5th graders at Crestview Elementary

Honorable Mention Michele Jones, Mathematics, Cyprus High School

As an Association, we couldn't be more proud of these 2019-20 AR of the Year award winners and all of GEA's Association Representatives for the difficult work you do every day to advocate, inform, and support GEA members in your school buildings!

Celebrating Another Award Winning GEA Member—Ryan Wells, Granite School District's 2020 Teacher of the Year.

Ryan Wells, Photo courtesy of Granite School District

Ryan Wells, Taylorsville High Spanish Teacher is the recipient of the Granite Education Foundation Excel Awards, and was named **Granite District's Teacher of the Year.** (see article on GSD Website)

Wells was also interviewed by the **Taylorsville City Journal** which outlines the passion and expertise he has as a teacher and excellent role model for students.

GEA is proud of the high caliber teachers in Granite School District and the fact that they have chosen GEA as their professional association.

Congratulations, Ryan!

Front Row Seat to the Action

Mike McDonough, GEA President

GEA is ramping up to begin a new election cycle for the Association. **There are several leadership positions open for this election**. I am hoping GEA has contested races – that is the sign of a healthy organization.

Being an association leader is a great experience, and it allows you the opportunity to make the changes that you wish to see in our organization. I encourage anyone who has the desire to share their voice on a local level to get involved and run for office.

The elected positions that will be open are:

- **President,**
- **Vice President, and**
- **Two Board of Director seats (including one 'at-large' seat and one Elementary Seat).**

In addition to the above open seats, we also have several National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly (RA) Delegate seats open for election. (Top vote-getters would attend the NEA RA held in Denver, CO in the summer of 2021.)

As you can see, this election will provide several options and levels of involvement within the Association. Think about running and talk to your colleagues about it. The declaration of candidacy will go out soon, **and it is due back on November 1st**, so now is the time to start considering running.

Being GEA president has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with so many great people. I am confident anyone choosing to take the plunge and run for office will reap the same rewards.

If you would like more information regarding the responsibilities of any of the GEA elected positions open, feel free to call Mike McDonough at the GEA UniServ office, (801) 266-4411 or email: Mike.Mcdonough@myuea.org

When we play in harmony,
we make music that cannot be ignored.

Ask your Granite Education Association (GEA) Building Representative how your voice can join the call for respect and contractual rights as a professional educator!

Contact us at the GEA UniServ Office: 875 East Arrowhead Lane (5180 S), Suite 1, Murray, UT * (801) 266-4411
GEA President, Michael McDonough – Executive Director, Star Orullian – Assoc. Director, Cindy Formeller – Office Manager, Shana Ellington

GEA Directors, Star Orullian and Cindy Formeller—Your "AdvoCats"

Star Orullian

Cindy Formeller

Dear AdvoCats,

My principal told teachers that due to the drop in student enrollment, some teachers may be moved to another school or RIF'd. What do you know about this?

Signed: Worried

Dear Worried:

This time of year is definitely scary and can get hackles up when we fear our jobs are not secure. This year, more than any other year, this is the case. GSD has made the statement that **no teachers will lose their employment this year**. As student enrollment is finalized, there may be some employees who are suplused to new positions, but everyone will continue to be employed. This is the promise from the superintendent and the school board.

If you are told by your principal that you will be suplused, call GEA and we will work with you and GSD HR to find a good placement for the remainder of this school year.

Dear AdvoCats,

I have been very careful to utilize all precautions against catching COVID-19, but still worry about the need to quarantine if someone in my classroom or school tests positive. I'm a new teacher and don't have a lot of sick leave to use if I am sent home. Help!

Signed: Sick & Tired

Dear Sick & Tired:

Many employees have the same concerns as you do. COVID-19 may cause more than one 14-day quarantine for employees and that's why the district has created the following plan: If you, as a teacher, are quarantined due to student, staff, or school positive cases, but are NOT experiencing symptoms, you will quarantine, and will be allowed to continue to work from home during the 14 days. No leave is necessary.

Let's say you are isolated due to a positive COVID-19 test, but you don't have symptoms (asymptomatic) you will be allowed to work remotely from home during your quarantine. No leave is necessary.

But, if you have COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting for test results, or if you have a positive COVID-19 test, **with symptoms**, you will be isolated at home and will need to take one of several sick leave options.

Following is a brief outline of options available:

1. Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides up to 10 days of **paid leave** if you are ill with COVID-19. This leave option expires on December 31, 2020.
2. Employees accumulated sick leave and/or personal leave will provide **paid leave** while you recover.
3. FFCRA provides **partial paid leave** if, as a parent, your children cannot go to school or their regular day-care due to closure or quarantine.
4. Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is an unpaid leave option for eligible employees (up to 12 weeks)

Leave options are differentl for everyone, and these are just a few options available. **As a GEA member, you are encouraged to call your AdvoCats so that we can guide you through this process.**

GSD Benefits Director, Berkley King (bdking@graniteschools.org) is also available to assist you in putting together a short or long term leave plan.

You are not alone. We are here to help you "meow-t".

November 2020 Elections

Mike McDonough, GEA President

There are so many reasons to **vote on Tuesday, November 3rd.** Every seat in the United States House of Representatives is up for re-election, including the 4 seats here in Utah. If you live in Utah's 4th Congressional District, the race pits incumbent Ben McAdams against Burgess Owens in one of the most competitive congressional races in the nation. McAdams has been endorsed by the UEA Political Action Committee (PAC). See the full list of UEA-PAC recommended candidates at **https://myuea.org/issues_action/elections.aspx**

I'd like to highlight a few of the races that you may not be hearing about on TV. This year's ballot will feature seven (7!!) proposed amendments to the Utah Constitution, city, and county mayoral and council races, local and state school board races, Utah Senate and House of representatives. Here's the full list of items you will find on the ballot this year: **https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/7071312-2020-General-Election-Certification.html**

It's a lot to consider, so let me hit the highlights:

4) **Constitutional Amendment G** would change the guarantee that Utah income tax solely go to public education, to splitting that state income tax to cover not only education, but also to providing funding for programs for children and people with disabilities. For the full context, remember that if Amendment G passes, House Bill 375 goes into effect. This bill would obligate the legislature to fund growth in student enrollment and inflation each year. The **ballotopedia** article has some background and links. I hope people will look at the information, and weigh the pros and cons.

3) **The Utah Legislature**. No group of people in the world has more say about the conditions under which you teach than the Utah Legislature. These are the people that pass the education budget every year. We need to get to the polls to support our friends on Capitol Hill: education-friendly incumbents like current Granite teacher and former GEA Vice President **Senator Kathleen Riebe**, and Representatives Craig Hall, Mike Winder, Karen Kwan, Jim Dunnigan, Mark Wheatley, and former Granite teachers Carol Spackman Moss and Elizabeth Weight; and great new voices like Clare Collard.

2) Don't overlook local municipal races like **Salt Lake County Council**. It was the Salt Lake County Council that stopped the Granite District split from going on the ballot the year that Jordan split. This year a Granite teacher, **Deborah Gatrell,** is running for County Council in district 2.

1) Another good reason to vote is the **Granite School Board** races. If any of our school board's decisions have left you thinking "there should be more teachers on that school board," you have a great candidate to support this year – our own **Star Orullian** is running for Granite School Board in district 2.

For a list of GEA-PAC recommended candidates, with links to their websites, see **https://www.gea-ut.org/gea-news/2020-gea-pac-recommended-candidates**

All PAC recommendations are based solely on the candidates' positions on education issues. No dues dollars are ever spent on political campaigns. In order to support education-friendly candidates, PAC relies completely on voluntary donations.

So make sure you are registered to vote. If you have moved recently, check your voter registration status at **https://secure.utah.gov/voterreg/index.html**

Ballots will be mailed out 21 days before Election Day. Be sure to vote!

Healthy Lifestyles: Granite District Wellness Clinic

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.

Open enrollment for Granite School District insurance begins on October 5—20 (see the flyer on the last page of this Observer). New employees who chose enrollment upon hire will need to re-enroll since this enrollment period is for 2020-21 insurance coverage.

As always, whenever you have a life-changing event (marriage, divorce, birth of a child, adoption, etc.) you will need to submit changes in your insurance without 30 days of the event. Your attention to your insurance plan options will assist you in getting the most from the benefits available.

For immediate mental health services and crisis intervention, this link contains options and resources for you and your family. You're not alone: reach out: support is waiting. https://www.graniteschools.org/hr/benefits/employee-resources/

GEA Members Speak Out

"Once a human being gets to a certain point of exhaustion, their efforts are no longer efficient. This has happened to me, and that is why it has taken me so long to try to accomplish everything I need to have done for tomorrow.

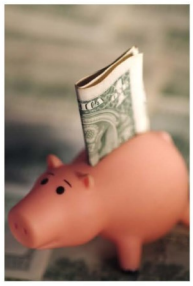
Teaches are in survival mode, and we keep moving until we're at a safe place, so that students in front of us tomorrow will have something...not everything we want them to have, but at least something that is somewhat meaningful.

I met with provisional teachers today (first and second year). Most said they feel like they've been hit by a train. Administration needs to know that they have given teachers more than one impossible task to complete." Jelena Jensen, former GEA AR of the Year

The Granite Education Association

Presents

"Retirement 101: What's Your Plan?"



What we'll be discussing:

Everyone is on a different retirement path. Some haven't even started the journey while others can see the light at the end of the tunnel. During "Retirement 101: What's Your Plan?" we'll cover basic concepts of retirement planning: Utah Retirement System (URS), identifying financial goals, investment vehicles, risk analysis, Rule of 72, diversification, pre- and post- tax, and compound interest. Specifics of what individuals should do will not be discussed, however, resources available from NEA Member Benefits will be shared to help members start the retirement journey.

Date, Time, and How to register:

Tuesday October 6, 2020 at 5:00-6:30 p.m. (MOUNTAIN)

Register at https://www.eventbrite.com/e/retirement-101-whats-your-plan-tickets-115884263953

Process:

After you register, you will receive the Zoom link and a couple of reminder e-mails, it is suggested that you log-in 5-10 minutes before to ensure there are no issues. After the presentation, the PowerPoint and other documents will be e-mailed to attendees.

It is suggested that you visit www.neamb.com/start prior to the training and register on the NEA Member Benefits website, this will allow members immediate access to various student loan resources. If you have any problems, call our Member Advocacy Center at 800.637.4636.

Sponsored by:

GEA GRANITE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

UTAH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION myUEA.org

nea Member Benefits

Live Link to Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/retirement-101-whats-your-plan-tickets-115884263953

OPEN ENROLLMENT

October 5-20

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

$50 Late Fee will be charged to employees who fail to *waive* or *complete* their 2021 elections during open enrollment. Open Enrollment will end October 20, 5:00pm (MST).

Every contract employee is **required** to waive or re-enroll insurance benefits during the mandatory on-line open enrollment period (Oct. 5 - 20, 2020) to continue insurance benefits for the 2021 plan year. YOU MUST WAIVE or RE-ENROLL COVERAGE at www.infinityhr.com .

Benefit Fairs

GEC – Auditorium C - 10/7/20
4-6pm, 2500 S. State Street

GEC – Auditorium C - 10/13/20
4-6pm, 2500 S. State Street

GEC – Auditorium C - 10/19/20
4-6pm, 2500 S. State Street

ROAD TO BENEFIT FAIRS

Services Available
- Online enrollment support – Computer Lab
- Enrollment questions answered
- Free Flu shot for employees -Auditorium C

Mandatory Online Enrollment

Granite SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Our page is: GEA

We also invite you to check out our website:
WWW.GEA-UT.ORG