

Know Your SEA Contract

By Peter Henry

(**Editor's note:** Starting with this issue of *Educators' Vision*, we'll run a regular column that will cover different parts of our contract. If you have questions about a specific part of the contract or are interested in writing and helping to educate fellow members about our contract, talk to a SEE member.)

As a substitute teacher, para or SAEOP, when am I eligible for health benefits?

If you are in the same position for 60 consecutive work days, you become eligible for district insurance. This is about 3 calendar months.

For certs, you can miss a single day's work in the first 20 days, and after this point you can earn and use sick leave at the rate of 1 day sick leave per 20 days worked. Sorry, classified employees. You don't start earning sick leave until you are in the job 60 days.

Do not make the mistake of thinking the district will contact you directly. "Eligible" means that you will get a very unremarkable letter in an ordinary envelope from Sprague Israel Giles, the District's insurance broker. Once you receive this letter you have one month to fill out the form and return it. If you fail to submit the form in time, you lose eligibility.

The form will ask you which insurance package you would like to apply for, and it will refer you to the benefits website where you can compare the various plans. The district's monthly contribution is \$920 for certs and \$980 for classified employees.

Insurance takes effect at the start of the next month if you return the form before the 15th of the month, and the start of the following month otherwise. It will continue for 3 months after the end of your job.

Protesting Betsy Devos in Bellevue

By Matthew Maley

On Friday October 13, the Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos spoke at the Hyatt Regency in Bellevue to a laundry list of business people, conservative politicians, and education deformers for the right-wing think tank, Washington Policy Center's, annual \$300 per plate dinner. Outside gathered in the street were 1,000 plus educators, students, and community members. While chants of "Black Lives Matter", "Impeach Trump!" and "Say it loud, say it clear – Immigrants are welcome here" filled the city block closed off by the Bellevue Police Department, Lincoln Town Cars and limousines rolled through the security checkpoint and into the hotel. It's likely most of those in attendance, like the unqualified DeVos herself, had never attended or taught in a public school.

At the rally outside, organized by the Equity in Education Coalition (EEC), sprinkled into a long list of Democratic Party politicians and candidate stump speeches, was the occasional demand for the full funding of the McCleary decision and the defense of public sector unions. Much emphasis was placed on Democrats retaking the State Senate in this year's election cycle, billing themselves as the panacea for public school funding ills.

Despite lofty rhetoric against the school-to-prison pipeline and for closing the achievement gap, by inviting King County Executive Dow Constantine, who has overseen and openly supported the building of a new, bigger youth jail in Seattle, the EEC exposed that they would rather pull big names than highlight the work being done in the classroom by educators and the community to resist the school-to-prison pipeline-like the NAACP, Social Equity Educator, and other organizations fight to introduce ethnic studies into all disciplines at all levels in Seattle.

After the rally ended, members of SEE organized dozens of people for a more effective use of our collective power by blocking the vehicle entrance to the event. Had there been more planning, hundreds of students, parents and educators could have shut down, or at least delayed, DeVos' speech.

Instead of waiting for progressive taxation to become an easy enough political fight for moderate representatives to take up, educators and community members should follow the lead of the Trump Proof Seattle coalition by using social movement pressure to force the Seattle City Council to pass an income tax of the rich. By forcing the fight to the State Supreme Court, the movement was able to do an end run around the legislative gridlock and take the question straight to the court of public opinion. Social Equity Educators calls for a statewide tax on the rich and big business to fully fund the McCleary decision. We need to build a mass movement of students, parents, and community members along with educators' unions to defend public education from charter profiteering and education deformers from the current White House administration on down.

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Dual Language Literacy Is Ethnic Studies

by Tracy Gill

Last May, the Seattle Public Schools school board voted unanimously to adopt ethnic studies curriculum in every school and every grade level. Today, two programs, which are inherently ethnic studies, are under attack in South Park.

Concord International Elementary School is known to be a jewel in this South Seattle neighborhood because of the culturally rich student population and curriculum, which has centered on Latinx culture and Spanish Language.

As an International School, Concord is the starting point for the dual language track in West Seattle. The other West Seattle International Schools in the dual language pathway, Denny, and Chief Sealth, have created a dual language program steeped in social justice and ethnic studies. The literacy teachers in this program have a primary goal of creating identity safety for their mostly Latinx students, and teaching Spanish in literacy provides more opportunity to study Hispanic authors, poets, activists, community leaders, and Latinx history than in any other discipline, other than social studies.

For reasons that are still unclear, Concord principal, Dr. Zavala, unilaterally decided to end the dual language literacy model. Concord PTSA organized a meeting on Tuesday, October 3rd, where many parents and community members expressed their outrage and disbelief that this decision was made without input from stakeholders. In addition to ending the literacy model, Dr. Zavala ended a hugely popular and successful partnership with Marra Farm and Solid Ground.

In her defense, Dr. Zavala claims that the dual language program is still intact and effective, because students are taught Spanish using math, science, music, and social studies content. The reason that students no longer receive Spanish instruction in literacy, according to Dr. Zavala and Seattle Public Schools, is because the district adopted new English language arts curriculum. Many attendees of Tuesday night's meeting expressed their opinion that this felt like pushing standardized testing as a priority, because English language arts is a tested subject, and it's only tested in English.

Another concern, in terms of ethnic studies, is that math and science are more challenging disciplines to teach about Latinx culture. Literacy and social studies are more natural disciplines for this content. However, a third grade, dual language teacher from Concord shared with the group that she is only allotted 55 minutes per school day to teach both science and social studies!

More time is given to math and literacy because they are tested subjects. Moving away from a model that fosters a more ethnic studies approach begs the question, "In a time of increasing gentrification in neighborhoods like South Park, who are the true beneficiaries of this new, dual language model?"

Upcoming Social Equity Educator meeting

All Seattle Education Association (SEA) members who believe in bringing social justice ideas into our classrooms and union are welcome and encouraged to attend. Our next meeting is on:

November 19th – 10:00am-12:00 pm at Savery Hall, room 136 at the University of Washington

Contact us: www.socialequalityeducators.org/join-us/ or call: 206-851-4963

New science curriculum was given as the reason for terminating the partnership with Marra Farm and Solid Ground. Marra Farm provided and taught free nutrition and farming sciences curriculum, and took the students on field trips to the farm. South Park and Concord are in a food desert, and the curriculum taught students to be proactive in their personal lives with nutrition AND in their communities – which is largely Hispanic!

Since it was provided through Marra Farm and Solid Ground, the teachers didn't have to do any extra work. Dr. Zavala argued that Marra Farm is operated by Seattle Parks and Rec., so it's still a resource, but parents pointed out that comes at the expense of more work on behalf of the teachers who would now have to provide the curriculum and handle cumbersome field trip paperwork. Marra Farm wanted to continue the partnership, but like the literacy program, Dr. Zavala acted without community engagement in ending the program.

Dual language literacy IS ethnic studies! The partnership with Marra Farm IS ethnic studies! Why is SPS allowing these programs to be cut? This is not what a district committed to ethnic studies and closing opportunity gaps looks like. They need to reinstate these programs and do better.

Please join us in supporting these important programs.

Tracy Gill is an SPS educator, advisory board member of Seattle Education Association's Center for Race and Equity, and a member of the NAACP Ethnic Studies Resolution Team. She is currently working on solutions to implementing ethnic studies curriculum in all grades and classrooms in Seattle Public Schools.

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SEE steering committee: Tracy Gill, Lauren Stark, Donte Felder, Jesse Hagopian, Ian Golash, Justin Vinson, and Darrin Hoop

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socialequalityeducators.org/

info@seattlesee.org

Mission

Social Equity Educators (SEE) is a new rank-and-file organization of educators inside the Seattle Education Association that seeks to transform education in terms that empower students, teachers, and the communities that our public schools serve. As members of the SEA we understand that the educator's union has a vital role to play in creating an equitable education system. As educators we understand the importance of using culturally relevant and holistic curriculum to empower our students. We have come together to fight against the corporate reform of our schools and to organize for a socially just education system.

The power of #MeToo

By Leia Petty

(Editors' note: According to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, as of September 2016, just under 73% of public school teachers in Washington State are female. In response to the growing national movement against sexual harassment, assault, and rape sparked by the revelations of the disgusting history of sexual assault by Harvey Weinstein, *Educators' Vision* reprints this edited article about how the #MeToo campaign has shone a spotlight on the unacceptable levels of sexual assault in the U.S. and the opportunities for building the struggle against it nationally. It has been shortened due to limited space.

Trigger warning: Donald Trump is quoted below.)

I moved on her, actually. You know, she was down on Palm Beach. I moved on her, and I failed. I'll admit it. I did try and fuck her. She was married...I moved on her very heavily...I moved on her like a bitch. But I couldn't get there. And she was married. Then all of a sudden I see her, she's now got the big phony tits and everything. She's totally changed her look...Yeah, that's her. With the gold. I better use some Tic Tacs just in case I start kissing her. You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful--I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything...Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything.

— Donald Trump

MANY OF us believed that these words, leaked one month before Election Day last year, would bring down Donald Trump. Instead, he won the presidency.

This belief of Trump and other privileged men like him that they can “do anything” to women--what Lindy West called in the *New York Times* [1] “the smothering, delusional, galactic entitlement of powerful men”--has led to countless cases of sexual harassment, assault and rape, which have rarely been punished.

The silence that women were forced into was deafening. But the rage produced by this injustice--a rage all women carry--cannot be buried forever. #MeToo is our latest eruption. And it won't be our last.

IN THE past few weeks, more than 30 high-profile men have been accused of sexual harassment and are finally facing real consequences. In many cases, the allegations are of a decades-long pattern of abuse--abuse that was known and encouraged in their inner circles--often in exchange for promised career advancement for the women who worked for them.

Men with privileged positions in the entertainment industry--movie producers, art magazine editors, well-known actors, photographers--have been the first to be scrutinized in the wake of media mogul Harvey Weinstein's sexual assault history coming to light.

Hollywood and the industries surrounding it are a collective institution where the objectification of women is built into the foundations of profit-making, producing a toxic mix of exploitation and sexism that has devastated women's lives.

But #MeToo has given women the confidence to tell their stories--because, for the first time in decades, they are being believed.

Recently, actor Kevin Spacey has been accused of sexual assault by multiple men, many of them teenagers at the time of the assaults--helping to initiate a much-needed conversation about the sexual abuse experienced by boys, which was also reflected in the #MeToo campaign.

#MeToo's impact has gone beyond Hollywood. British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon was forced to quit after allegations of sexual harassment. Several members of parliament and more than 30 lawmakers from Theresa May's Conservative Party also face allegations. Three Dartmouth professors have been put on paid leave while a criminal investigation is carried out for “serious misconduct.”

All signs point to this continuing. For those who have experienced sexual harassment and abuse, watching this unfold produces a combination of horror and vindication. Especially revealing is how many the women speaking out now have come forward in the past, and been silenced, with many experiencing lifelong trauma as a result.

The confidence to continue speaking out, the confidence that comes from finally being believed, can only help the movement against sexual harassment and assault--and strengthen the wider struggle against all injustice...

#MeToo provided a means to break the silence and transform the injustices we experience into something “to be fought instead of endured,” as Jen Roesch wrote at *SocialistWorker.org* [2].

In short, #MeToo has transformed victimhood--and that has political consequences. As James Baldwin wrote, “The victim who is able to articulate the situation of the victim has ceased to be a victim: he or she has become a threat.” Coming forward with our individual stories is a

necessary precondition to becoming a real threat.

The confidence of women to continue coming forward will depend on whether the men responsible face real consequences. So far, several dozen have been forced to resign or quit, or have lost contracts...

GIVEN THE sea change that has taken place in a matter of weeks, it's even more important for progressives and socialists to support the women and men coming forward, find ways to turn increased awareness into activism, and collaborate with fellow feminists on how to build a movement that can challenge sexism in all its forms...

The fact that the floodgates have been opened to talk about sexual abuse and harassment gives feminists the opportunity to raise the voices of the most oppressed among us.

Tarana Burke, the originator of #MeToo a decade ago, started the campaign to bring forward the stories of sexual assault experienced by Black women and connect women with one another. As Burke stated in a series of tweets in response to the resurgence of the #MeToo campaign:

The point of the work we've done over the last decade with the “me too movement” is to let women, particularly young women of color, know that they are not alone--it's a movement...It's beyond a hashtag. It's the start of a larger conversation and a movement for radical community healing.

WHERE THAT “larger conversation and movement” can go next should be the topic of discussion on the left. As Alex Press writes in an article for Jacobin titled “The Union Option” [6]:

In an era when so many of us know how widespread workplace sexual harassment is, it's important to take in the details of a rare case of a harasser being publicly accused. This is the exception to the rule, which is that powerful men like Weinstein get to harass and assault women until they die, no matter how many people in their industries know about it.

But having digested these details, we--or at least those of us concerned with fighting these injustices--arrive at a question: What do we do about it?

It's significant that the exposure of Weinstein and the #MeToo resurgence spurred on by it has had tangible results in bringing down some vile sexists--and doing more to put men in positions of power on notice than all the fake corporate “sensitivity” trainings.

But Press points to a further step: translate increased awareness into “formal collective action. When it comes to the workplace, the most common vehicle for this step is a union. Any of us who want to stamp out sexual harassment in the workplace should be fighting for those protections too.”

This is a valuable contribution to the conversation: Increasing protections for women and others who experience sexual harassment and creating the mechanisms to address it within our unions is a critical component of the larger fight.

But given that union density is at a low point in modern U.S. history, unions can only be a part of the solution.

And what's more, the confidence required for women to address sexual harassment in the workplace is directly linked to how widespread the feminist movement is *outside* the workplace.

WHAT WOULD it take for the heightened awareness of sexual abuse and the confidence to confront it to translate into a more combative and organized feminist movement?

Activism around sexual harassment and assault were cornerstones of prior feminist movements, most notably in the women's liberation movement of the 1970s.

And with the Trump administration, there is no shortage of attacks on women's rights that we need to confront. As the #MeToo eruption was taking place, the House voted to ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, Trump issued an executive order allowing employers to deny birth control coverage to women, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos gutted Title IX measures around campus sexual assault, and multiple attempts have been made to defund Planned Parenthood.

The conditions that have produced an emboldened right have also created the possibility of an emboldened resistance--and there are no shortage of battlegrounds on which a new feminist movement can fight.

The link between a fight against sexual harassment and reproductive justice is a demand for full control over our bodies and self-determination in our lives.

Let all of the sexual harassers in positions of power continue to fall. But long-term justice cannot be served without socialists and feminists building resistance organizations to continue the fight beyond social media.

We need to build resistance organizations that can defend abortion clinics, demand campus administrations reinstate Title IX protections, mobilize thousands against the sexual harassment--and, in the process, give women and men who want to stamp out sexism a place to come together to build the struggle.

#MeToo isn't a spectator sport to either be supported or dismissed. It's a moment that we can transform into a movement that takes the struggle against sexual harassment and all forms of oppression forward.

(The full article along with citations was originally published at: <https://socialistworker.org/2017/11/09/the-power-of-metoo>)