



Options in education

The Newsletter of the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives

The Value of Volunteering

by Mark Brundage

I have a little story I would like to share with all the WALA folks. It's about volunteering.

At the spring WALA state conference at Ocean Shores, during the Friday evening banquet, I was surprised to receive an unannounced award in recognition of my service as a regional representative. I wanted to say something to everyone there, but I was too choked-up with emotion to think rationally.

Receiving this award prompted me to reflect over the 17 years I've spent in education. I thought back to my former life as a migrant road tramp during the 70's. After I received my college degree in 1972, I dropped out of society, hit the road, and traveled with migrant farm workers for the next 10 years. I never told anyone that I had an education. I became one of them. It was a time of hard travelin' and hard livin'.

In the early 80's, it dawned on me that this was a dead-end and there was no longer any future to this kind of work. I had enjoyed it and the lifestyle at the time, but it was bloody hard.



Mark Brundage was speechless as he was honored as an outgoing region rep.

And then it started to become slightly violent. Competition at the bottom of the ladder was fierce! I was living that winter on unemployment benefits...a whopping \$250 a month. Lean times! So, while I was living out of my car during a very rainy and cold winter in Santa Cruz, California, I decided to do something with my education. I read an ad in the local newspaper about the volunteer bureau needing volunteers to teach English to newly-arrived immigrants. So, I queried the volunteer bureau. They

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Conference Corner

by Gary Babcock

The Thirtieth Annual spring Conference is now a memory, or series of memories for four hundred dedicated and committed educators. Many friendships were renewed and there was even a spontaneous birthday celebration at the banquet. Although participation was smaller than usual from members bringing items for the silent and live auctions, over \$2400 was raised for WALA scholarships. As attendees prepared to leave the conference and return to the "real world" they remembered, as they remind their students, to complete their final assignment and respond to the evaluation form.

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SEE WHAT'S NEW IN

Scholarships and Grants

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The Inside Scoop

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Conference Corner

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Evaluation forms are an important part of any conference or activity as they provide organizers and presenters with the information necessary to make the next event more meaningful and pleasant (yes we actually read every one). The evaluations from this conference relayed the feeling that the conference keynoters were well received and appreciated as evidenced by comments about Dr. Sylwester stating that his presentation was "very interesting and informative" and "provided good tools for bringing about change in the classroom" and was "a good blend of scientific research and educational application." Comments about Dr. Sharratt were "wonderful, uplifting, positive" and "needed to be energized and reminded of our importance in the lives of our kids by giving hope and making dreams a reality."

Arguably the most important part of the conference is the series of breakout sessions available to those attending. This year we had the unfortunate situation of having several last minute cancellations due to illnesses and unforeseen complications. Those who cancelled were most apologetic and expressed a desire and commitment to present at future conferences. Many of the sessions received outstanding evaluations and requests for their return and all presenters are to be thanked and commended for their willingness to share.

There were some things missing, however, to make the conference a more meaningful experience for some. There was an expressed desire to have sessions presenting successful middle school programs and designs as well as teen-parent programs, drug and alcohol intervention programs, transition programs for adjudicated youth, hands on science



Darlene Quayle (left) roasted outgoing president Jim Sparks (right) (not a chicken, not a duck) and crowned him during the banquet festivities



ideas and, in general, sessions in any subject areas demonstrating classroom strategies that work in all areas. The fulfillment of these needs rests in the hands of our membership as our conferences are primarily practitioner workshops where successes are shared. You all have something to offer. If you have something that is really working, and you would be willing to share please fill out the Call for Presenters form in your conference notebook (if you attended the conference), or go to the website at www.walakids.com and complete the form.

As with any conference there are issues of concern. This year one of the largest areas of concern was the condition and hospitality of the Shilo as the host site. All concerns expressed on the evaluations have been shared with the Shilo and we are awaiting their response as we begin preparations for future conferences. As we face the challenges of finding locations which will meet the requirements of providing convenience, comfort and service for a large number of attendees within a short period of time, please be assured that I, as the conference coordinator and your elected governing board are sensitive to your needs and desires and will move to meet them in as timely a manner as possible.



Conference Comments from Regional Director, Andy Wheeler:

What a great WALA Conference!! We can all take a deep breath and finish out the 2004-05 school year with having to do more than ever, but also getting the tools necessary to do our jobs.

The WALA Conferences play an integral part in maintaining our professionalism and giving us the knowledge to function and perform better as alternative educators. Learning so much from our colleagues and sharing with others who are in the same learning environment, is an indispensable benefit that our gatherings provide. Thanks to the well-planning of our WALA people for the smooth and effective operation of the spring conference.

As regional directors, we thank you for your support and confidence you have placed in us to carry on expectations for the coming year. The region can only work together if we bind ourselves for the common cause that is reflected in our mission statement.



Both speakers kept the conference attendees enthralled



President's Message

Challenges and Changes

by Jim Sparks, WALA President

Every year Dr. Terry Bergeson, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, is one of the keynote speakers at the spring convention. This year we challenged Dr. Bergeson to tell our membership good news, and about all the positive things that the state is doing for us. Dr. Bergeson accepted this challenge, and gave us more than we bargained for. She told us about possible changes to the Learning Assistance Program, with additional funding for secondary education. She talked about the work being done on finding alternatives to the WASL for graduation requirements. Then, she hit us with a challenge of her own. Terry asked WALA to form a partnership with OSPI to find solutions to the problems we are facing.

This request for a partnership follows some changes we have made at WALA. As you know we are not an organization with a full-time staff; and our non-profit status forbids us from lobbying. Until lately, our Executive Director, Lile Holland and a long list of past directors, have been our only connection with OSPI and the legislature. Our executive directors have testified before the house and advised OSPI.

Lately, we have become more active in Olympia. WALA Board members and general membership personnel have volunteered to participate in numerous advisory boards and workgroups. We have board members working with the re-write of the Alternative Learning Experience WAC, the alternatives to the WASL graduation requirement group, the highly qualified teacher group, and several more. We are participating in these groups so our voices are heard, and so our members will get the information necessary to do their job.

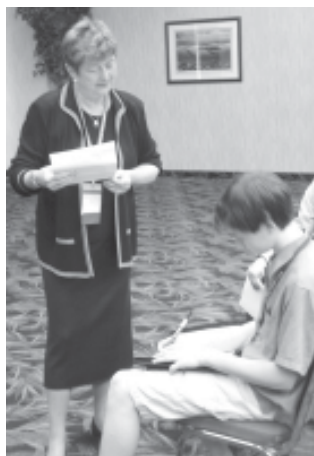
In light of our expanded partici-

pation in Olympia, I am excited to receive Dr. Bergeson's proposal. We have had a great relationship with OSPI. Formalizing our relationship can only benefit WALA. We would like to form a think tank of members to develop ways to solve the problems that are unique to alternative education. Some the items that will be developed are:

- * Better communications between OSPI and WALA
- * Piloting alternative assessments to the WASL for graduation
- * Alternative Learning Plans and the required learning plans
- * Providing flexibility to the WASL assessment schedule for 2006
- * Highly qualified educators and an alternative certification for teachers
- * Developing easier work study guidelines

I am sure that all of you can think of many more items that could be on our agenda. The possibilities are numerous.

What started out as a challenge to Dr. Bergeson has become a challenge to WALA. It is a challenge to find a way to get our message heard and to find answers to our problems. It is my hope that we accept this challenge. I look forward to informing the WALA membership on the future developments of this partnership, and how we are making a difference for everyone.



Superintendent Terry Bergeson took a moment to administer a spelling test to young volunteer Ben Bennett

The Value of Volunteering

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offered me a short 15-hour inservice in teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) and provided textbooks.

I spent the entire winter teaching young Vietnamese children in their homes and a small group of Mexican nationals who worked in a nursing home. It was incredibly rewarding and I found that I really loved teaching. I was a volunteer. I did not receive any financial incentives or rewards. I even had to pay for my own gas to get from one place to the next. Money did not enter the picture at all. That was clear from the start.

I discovered that I was good at establishing rapport with foreign nationals and teaching ESL came easily to me. Catherine Merriam, the director of the volunteer bureau, encouraged me to apply for a temporary provisional teaching credential. I didn't think I had a prayer to get one but I did. And that is how I entered the teaching profession: through volunteer service. ...Now, I'm an ESL teacher exclusively serving migrant farmworkers as their teacher as well as their advocate.

Serving on the WALA Board as a volunteer regional representative has also been a truly rewarding experience. It has definitely enhanced my professional educational experience. Again, the rewards are intrinsic. Sure it takes my time and a few Saturdays, but it's sure worth all the effort.

Volunteering is a reward that comes straight from the heart. You do it because you want to do it. Money is not a question. I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to serve alternative education. Working with a group of dedicated professionals who devote their time and energy to make things happen for a worthy cause is a reward that is above any price.



WALA/OSPI Research Teams Forming: What Alt Ed Strategies Are Working?

by Lile Holland, Exec. Director of WALA

Principle #2: Specificity

"If I go to one more conference where we hold hands and chant, 'All children can learn,' I'm not going to be able to take it anymore. I believe that all children can learn, but I have never achieved anything with a mantra. Accountability is not about chanting mantras; it's not about generalities."¹

The above comments made by D.B. Reeves have been replayed and repeated by countless educators. We have heard the generalities and promises, we have heard the challenges and threats – what we have not heard are the state and federal resources needed to make education reform and accountability work.

When Dr. Terry Bergeson addressed the conference she gave us a ray of hope. It was not a "feel good," or "you must believe" presentation – instead it offered specific plans to deal with many of the challenges we face. Plans that include resources to help meet the needs of students struggling to pass the WASL and plans that include pilot studies to learn what works and what works best.

We've got to know specifically what works. We've got to investigate which strategies in our own communities are specifically associated with improved student achievement. And let's focus on behaviors, not just test scores-in other words, "measure what the grownups do."²

The sentiments stated by D.B. Reeves and echoed by Dr. Bergeson represent the challenge to alternative education. "We've got to know specifically what works".

Terry has requested that WALA member schools volunteer to work

with OSPI. This may include piloting new ideas, learning new strategies, or being a part of a research team – i.e., finding out what works! She, like many alternative educators, believes the time for talking is over, we need to find strategies and resources that actually improve student achievement. We need our own research data – and we need it now!

If you or your school would like to be part of the workgroup, please e-mail me. If you just want to be informed and get information on what is happening, e-mail me and I will put you on our contact list. This is a great opportunity for alternative schools – I know I can count on you and your support. You can contact me at walakids@comcast.net.

¹ D.B. Reeves. *Accountability In Action: A Blueprint for Learning Organizations*. Denver: Advanced Learning Press, 2000.

² D.B. Reeves. *Accountability In Action: A Blueprint for Learning Organizations*. Denver: Advanced Learning Press, 2000.

WALA Scholarships Receive a Facelift

by Billie Needham

The WALA Secondary Student Scholarship application information and forms have changed. Do not use forms from previous years; use only the latest version. To get the new information and forms, go to the WALA website at www.walakids.com, or contact Billie Needham at:

b_needham@eatonville.wednet.edu
(360) 879-1218 (work)
(253) 847-7134 (home)

What is different? The entire process has been streamlined. Students are required to fill out the application form as before. However, students now submit just one copy of the required materials. What's required has also changed. They are required to write an autobiographical essay that is one to two pages long. An official transcript must be included in the materials. One to two letters of reference are required (one

must be from a certified educator from the alternative program or school). The Focus Project has become an optional part of the application. It is recommended for students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing or who want to highlight a personal strength. See the new information and form for details regarding any of these pieces of the process.

As before, students must be sponsored by a WALA member alternative school or program. A staff member from the alternative school must sign the application form verifying accuracy and completeness of the application materials. The deadline has not changed either. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than the third Friday in April, which this year is April 15.

If you need further information, please call or e-mail Billie Needham.

WALA Grant Money Available

by Billie Needham

WALA grants are still available this year. Some have open applications while others have definite deadlines. In the "definite deadline" group are the Bob Carpenter Grant for School Projects and the Harry Johnson Grant for School Projects. Both of these grants are due by the second Friday in May (May 13). The Carpenter Grant is for elementary/middle level schools and programs. The Johnson Grant is for high school programs. \$750.00 is budgeted by the WALA Board of Directors to fund each of these grants. Grants are awarded to members for a specific project and require program/school membership in WALA. Funds will be awarded in June for the WALA fiscal year, September 1 - August 31.

Other grants have open application periods and are available until funds are expended for the year. The



Grants/PPP



Earl Grambau Elementary Service Grant (\$75.00) is for small, student-generated and implemented projects. The WALA Conference Follow-Up Program Grants (up to \$1000.00 each; 5% of the March conference net profit) are for projects whose impetus was a workshop, speaker, or experience from the WALA conference - to glean an idea and develop it in your own school or program. These grants require program/school membership in WALA.

Two grants, also with open applications, are offered to members having individual membership in WALA. All conference attendees have a one-year individual membership. The Educational Growth Grants (\$750.00) are provided for the benefit of individual WALA members pursuing and disseminating knowledge in educational alternatives. The WALA Original Research Grant (\$500.00) is provided to individual WALA members wishing to undertake original research pertinent to alternative education, to the individual, and to the WALA organization.

For all these grants, recipients will be asked to submit a report on their project, to be published in *OPTIONS IN EDUCATION* newsletter, and to give a presentation at the WALA conference following completion of the project.

For more information and to get application forms, go to the WALA web site, www.walakids.com, or contact Billie Needham via e-mail (b_needham@eatonville.wednet.edu) or phone (360-879-1218 at work and 253-847-7134 at home).

PPP News

by Marianna Hanefeld

It was lovely to make and renew so many friendships in the PPP community at the March Conference in Ocean Shores. The conference helped us all to take a good hard look at the serious issues that face all of Alternative Education this year, and Parent Partnership Programs in particular, but without, I think, the sense of overwhelming "doom and gloom" we have had in the past year.

Parent Partnership Programs, working with WALA leadership, have had the opportunity to "come to the table" in terms of having a voice in the current WAC re-write. We currently have six of our Principals and Directors who are actively attending meetings and giving input to this important process. While the process of government always involves compromise, at least we can say at the end that our interests were accurately represented by individuals who work in Partnerships and with students and parents on a daily basis. This can only be positive not just for PPPs, but for all ALE programs in general.

Upcoming Events

We had to cancel our April 7th Administrator's meeting in Tri-Cities due to a conflict with district spring breaks. However, our 2nd **"Parents In Partnership Conference" is being planned and will be held on May 21st**. It will be held at Sky Valley Education Center in Monroe, from 9 am to 4 pm.

This year's conference features speaker Wendy Wartes. She is one of the authors of the state's Home-Based Instruction law and long-time homeschool advocate. There will be breakout sessions, workshops, and hopefully, vendors. The \$10.00 per person fee includes a catered lunch.

Conference flyers, Registration and a Call for Presenters will be arriving in your e-mail soon. Program parents will teach sessions, too. If you have parents (or teachers) who would like to do a non-program related presentation at the conference, we would like to hear from

them. Please keep an eye on your e-mail for all of the conference information, or go to the WALA web-site.

Keep up the great work you are doing for families out there. Feel free to contact me with questions and comments. I'll do my best to find answers or will find someone in the know. mhanefeld@verizon.net, or mhanefeld@lwsd.org.



The student art took over the lobby of the Shilo and highlighted our students' talents

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NEXT DEADLINE: May 10, 2005

OPTIONS welcomes and encourages articles and news relating to the WALA Mission and Vision. We reserve the right to edit for clarity, brevity and appropriateness. The views expressed in *OPTIONS* articles do not necessarily express the policies or beliefs of the WALA Board of Directors. Reprints of *OPTIONS* articles are permitted with credit unless another source is indicated. Comments and contributions are encouraged.

Back issues of OPTIONS going back to Fall, 2002 may be viewed by visiting the WALA website at www.walakids.com.



Alternative Students Head to Sea

by Bonnie Jump



A few seaworthy Hoquiam High School Alternative students along with Aberdeen Harbor High students will be heading to sea on a one-week cruise on the schooner Zodiac. As part of the Marine Technology program, students will spend one week aboard the historical ship over spring break. While traveling the Strait of Juan de Fuca, students will participate in sailing watches, longboat adventures, science experiments, and learn about careers in science and the maritime trades.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience will enable students the opportunity to enjoy personal growth and form strong bonds, not to mention the credit they can earn towards science. Students will enjoy and experience the wonders of the marine environment through adventure and hands-on activities. The expedition enforces the daily use of math and science in everyday lives, along with it just being a great opportunity.

The history of the ship itself is extremely interesting. The Zodiac was originally designed by William Hand Jr. as a racing yacht. In 1924, much effort was put into the Zodiac to create a vessel of integrity. For a time in the 1930s, it was renamed "California," but returned to its original name in 1984. Painstaking and countless hours have been put into keeping the Zodiac afloat and seaworthy. Through the efforts of numerous volunteers, the vessel is surely an example of the historic beauty representing the sea industry. We are honored to send our students on such an exciting adventure and learning opportunity.

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Election Results In!

Position One in each Region was up for election this year. Congratulations all! Here are the results of the voting at the March Conference:

Region I	Dan Arola
Region II	Brad Sprague
Region III	Bonnie Jump
Region IV	Tom Hays
Region V	Ian Wilder
Region VI	Raun Jensen

Region I

by Andy Wheeler and Dan Arola

At this writing, our school has gone through an audit but we have yet to get our report back. The district has closed a program, opening up a building for our use. I've done a great deal of discipline, counseling, teaching, and just plain dealing with things. Despite the hardships and trials, the kids still come and smile – at least most of the time. I'm thankful for support I find from various places. Our auditor and OSPI have worked well with us. I'm back in WALA as a region director, appreciating the dedication of those nearby and what they can teach me.

For the rest of the year, there are some events that might provide you with some motivation or inspiration. On April 13 there is a Region I mini-session in Arlington. We will have a representative from OSPI and other sessions as well. Here is a list of upcoming events:

Friday-May 13, 4:15 to 7:15, Arlington PPP Center – An opportunity to spend time with OSPI representative Martin Mueller who will hear our concerns and guide us in the legal responsibilities of Parent Partner Programs. Not only will it be a session to guide us, but it will be an opportunity to help us get to the source of who and where we can go for concerns and issues. Check your e-mail as details are forthcoming: there are only spaces



Regional News

available to the first 50 who reply.

Thursday-May 19, Shoreline – Friendship Games. See the website for details. A wonderful opportunity to meet other students and folks in alternative education. (Thanks again to Chris Allen for hosting!)

Saturday-May 14, Golf Tournament, Sequim - Details are the website. The proceeds are to benefit WALA scholarships.

Saturday-May 21, Monroe, 9 am-4 pm – “Parents in Partnership” mini-conference for parents at the Sky Valley Education Center. For more information call Marianna Hanefeld, WALA Parent Partnership Liaison, 425-765-1116 or Karen Rosencrans, Conference Host and Assistant Director, 360-863-1828.

Plans are underway for a “Share Fair” in October preceding the fall conference in Lake Chelan. We will most likely post details before summer break so you can plan ahead. The “Share Fair” will focus on sharing the tools we use: handbooks, student learning plans, conference-time forms, and other informative and helpful things we do in alternative education.

From your regional managers, we want to thank you for your support and we look forward to directing our efforts to provide benefits to you and your programs. Above all—we and WALA need your support, cooperation, and ideas so we can move toward a common goal—sustaining us in all we do—for our districts, students, and families!

Region II

Welcome to our new rep, Brad Sprague!

Region III

by Randy Hill

At the Region III meeting held in Ocean Shores, we made the decision to hold a fall meeting to discuss possible WAC changes and to go over common types of forms that may be

used in our programs. The plan will be to hold the meeting at the same time every year in order to help facilitate attendance. In addition, it was recommended that a spring meeting be held as well.

Bonnie and I appreciate your input! We hope to have a fall speaker lined up soon. We also discussed visiting different programs in our region. Please feel free to contact other programs in the region if you would like to visit. We are very flexible in Sequim and are willing to visit with anyone at any time.

Remember to sign up on the website for the WALA Golf Tournament. It will be held at SkyRidge Golf Course in Sequim on May 14, 2005.

Region IV

by Tom Hays

Introducing Mark Clements

Hello from your new Region co-Director, Mark Clements. If you didn't get a chance to attend the spring conference at Ocean Shores, you missed a great opportunity to learn, share, and network with a lot of caring and dedicated people. I encourage you to consider attending the fall conference at Lake Chelan and/or the spring conference next year at Ocean Shores.

To introduce myself, this is my 25th year in the education profession. I have served as the social studies department chair for a small high school in eastern Oregon, a middle school teacher, middle and high school boys and girls coach, high school athletic director and vice principal, middle school vice principal and TAG coordinator, and a middle school principal. Currently, I instruct for the University of Phoenix; and for the past six years, I have been a teacher, site coordinator, assistant principal, and now principal at River HomeLink, a Battle Ground S.D. PPP, located in Camas, WA. I have experience on the Oregon Staff Development Council, the Oregon Middle Level Association state board, and am currently serving on the ALE WAC revision workgroup. I've

taken too many workshops and in-services to count, and am still try to get something practical out of each one. I am happily married to a great writing teacher, Terri, and we have three daughters. I believe that every person has intrinsic worth, and that we all should treat others like we want to be treated. Being involved in alternative education is an honor and a privilege. I believe that we should set up systems, schools, learning experiences, etc. all around what benefits students and enhances their learning. Ultimately, it is all about relationships. Enough of that.....

Please feel free to contact Tom Hays or me, if you need help or have questions regarding WALA. Tom is a great source for information and wisdom. If either of us can't answer your questions, we can probably steer you in the right direction. There is a lot of wisdom and information within this organization, so please take advantage of the resources available to you through WALA. I can be reached at the River HomeLink school number (360) 834-1000, FAX (360) 834-0928, or clements.mark@bgsd.k12.wa.us Enjoy the rest of the year!

Region V

No report submitted

Region VI

by Gary Jensen and Raun Jensen

It was necessary for us to change the day of our next and last regional mini-session for this school year. Rather than April 30, we will hold it on April 23. Everything else is the same. We will get more details out soon, but wanted to alert you of the date change. Watch your e-mail!

By-law Change Passed

The General assembly also approved a by-law change that allows for a 50% + 1 vote for passage of action items instead of 51%.

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CALENDAR AT A GLANCE



Dianne Korvola (right) was honored for her many volunteer contributions to the conferences and to her local school program. Cherie Exner (left) presents gift.

APRIL

- 7-9 IALA Conference, Iowa
- 9 PPP, Tri Cities, WA
- 13 Region I mini-session in Arlington
- 15 WALA Scholarship Applications due
- 16 Executive Board Meeting
- 22-23 Region VI Meeting, A.L.P.S. HS, Othello [****THIS HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM APRIL 29-30**]

MAY

- 7 WALA State Board Meeting, Budget Planning, Snoqualmie Pass, 9 am-3 pm
- 10 Deadline for *OPTIONS*
- 13 Martin Mueller from OSPI speaks at Arlington PPP Center about PPP programs, 4:15-7:15 pm
- 14 WALA Golf Tournament, Skyridge Golf Course, Sequim, WA, hosted by Region III
- 19 Region II Friendship Games in Shoreline
- 21 "Parents in Partnership" mini-conference at Sky Valley Education Center.

JUNE

- 11 Executive Board Meeting, Region I

For additional details, please call (800) 455-WALA or Lile Holland by cell phone at (360) 981-5487. You may also check the website at www.walakids.com for up-to-the-minute calendar updates.

