

2019 Teacher of the Year:

Susan Douglas, Almira School District

Susan Douglas did not drive a traditional route to the classroom. At Washington State University, she majored in criminal justice. In her first job out of school, she was a police officer in Hendersonville, TN, near Nashville.

More than a decade passed before she returned home to Washington. By now, she had a master's degree from the University of Tennessee and an expansive resume that included work in legal services, mental health and legislative affairs.

But how do you apply those experiences when you marry a farmer and move to Almira, WA? For Douglas, you start by volunteering in the local school.

It was a transformative experience in which Douglas found her true calling. She didn't belong in a police car or legislative office, but in a classroom.

Her volunteer work led to a part-time job in special education, more schooling at Gonzaga University and Seattle Pacific University and a full-time job with the Almira School District, where she is now an elementary math and science specialist and special education coordinator.

For someone who did not officially begin her teaching career until the age of 40, a late start did not hinder her progress. If anything, it only super-charged her innovation, creativity and enthusiasm.

While she may teach in one of the area's smallest rural districts, she has earned a reputation as one of the region's most respected educators. In August, that respect was formally recognized when a panel of judges named Douglas NEWESD 101's Teacher of the Year for 2019. With that honor comes automatic nomination for the state Teacher of the Year award.

The Douglas difference begins with what her colleagues call "passion projects" designed to make math and science relevant to the world.

Her real-world studies are practically endless ... Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, robotics, air quality studies, trout in the classroom and, of course, the district's blockbuster Ag STEM Day in which students examine the careers, economics and science of growing, marketing and selling crops.

Her emphasis on developing relationships between students and community is instrumental to student success.

She effectively brings the world to the classroom, showing students the many ways they can become difference makers. "Education and experience empower our students and it is important to provide rich and authentic access to both," she says. "Students want to be relevant in their families, their classroom and their community."



2019 NEWESD 101 Teacher of the Year Susan Douglas

For Douglas, her own ability to make a difference lies, in part, on her relentless quest to remain a student herself. Her summers, when not helping on the family farm, are often spent in classes and workshops. Most recently, she conducted research at an active paleontological field site in Montana.

Having been a NEWESD 101 Math and Science Fellow, Douglas believes she has a professional responsibility to constantly seek new ideas and better practices.

Douglas' interest in students does not end when her classes end, says Almira Superintendent Shauna Schmerer. "She is a servant leader for her community, profession and students. She continually inspires students and peers to try harder and be better."

It is an inspiration that produces results.

"Students regularly tell me the difference Susan has made in their lives," says Almira Associate Administrator Anna Thomas. "Whether it is allowing students to research a passion project, or spending time after school to tutor a child, the common message I receive from students is, 'Mrs. Douglas believes in me and listens to me.' To Susan, being an educator is a way of life."

Call her an amazing teacher. Call her a servant leader. Those are just two of the ways to describe the 2019 Teacher of the Year.

A half century has passed

Lots has changed; some fundamental things have not

Fifty years ago, the former 39 county offices of education in Washington state were consolidated into 14 intermediate school districts, later renamed educational service districts in the early 1970s. What is now known as NEWESD 101, then, celebrates our first half-century of service this year.

In 1969 gas was 35 cents per gallon, the average price of a new car was \$3,270, average cost for a brand new home was \$15,500, and the average annual income per year was \$8,550. Bell bottom jeans and tie-dye shirts became fashionable for young people; and popular music artists included the *Rolling Stones*, the *Beatles*, *The Jimi Hendrix Experience* and *Creedence Clearwater Revival*.

Richard Nixon was inaugurated as the United States President; the draft lottery was implemented; and Woodstock, the Stonewall Riots and the Charles Manson murders all occurred. Wal-Mart was incorporated, and the first United States astronauts landed on the moon.

And the intent of intermediate school districts (now ESDs) was then what it substantively remains in part today – to provide support and information to individual school districts, striving toward a more even playing field for students (and staff) across the state – regardless of school or district.

A half century hence, all of us in education remain in the midst of striving for equity and quality for all, whether it be in educational offerings, quality of facilities, or compensation for professionals whose life's work is to serve students.

Fifty years ago in our region and across the diversity of our country, however, the educational enterprise was preparing students for a different future than what has evolved. We had not yet hit a true technological age and all that is now part of our everyday lives and realities, nor had the ongoing battle for civil rights and equity of opportunity for all yet made all of the strides that have since been accomplished, even as we have significant distance yet to travel on this crucial journey.

Facts, as much as were known, existed; the concept of an “alternative fact” was not espoused – that would have then been called an untruth. Societal disagreements were growing and increasingly evident, especially with respect to a war that was becoming increasingly unpopular, and political differences of course were present. Yet there was no “cable” television or radio “news” and no Internet; newspapers, networks and libraries were sources of information and citizens needed to be informed consumers of it.

While much of our current reality, and the depth of division over any number of issues, are different than in 1969, a focus on the needs of students and on preparing each of them for successful futures has not changed. It has, however, gotten better, and it must continue to. We know more about how people learn and about multiple learning styles.

We understand more deeply that we must attend to inequities of opportunity – and achievement gaps that result – for students of varying socioeconomic and ethnic and cultural backgrounds; who speak different languages; and for those who must deal with adverse childhood experiences and issues associated with mental health and physical safety.

The privilege that those of us who work as part of the NEWESD 101 team feel for the opportunity to work with so many outstanding educators, on behalf of almost 100,000 fine young students, across public school districts and private and charter schools in seven counties – *has not changed*.

We are grateful to partner with you, proud of the work done by you and your students, value the parents and guardians and larger communities who support you ... and our commitment to do even more and better over the *next* 50 years is embraced by each of us with renewed passion and zeal.



Michael Dunn, Superintendent

Welcome to new superintendents

The NEWESD 101 region welcomes 11 administrators to new superintendent positions for the 2018-19 school year:

Thomas Pulliam, Benge; Rich McFarland, Chewelah;

Paul Clark, Colton; Wayne Massie, Harrington; Steve Gaub, Keller; Todd Spear, Lamont; Don Vanderholm, Lind-Ritzville; Rick Linehan, Rosalia; Kristina Allen, Summit Valley; Mark Heid, Tekoa; and Ben Ferney, Valley.

Congratulations to all and welcome aboard.

Focus is published by the Superintendent of NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101. Focus is published to provide current information about NEWESD 101-sponsored and co-sponsored programs and issues of educational significance to staff in the 59 public school districts, 45 state-approved private schools and two charter schools receiving administrative and instructional support services from NEWESD 101.

Comments, questions or suggestions should be sent to the editor, NEWESD 101, 4202 S. Regal St., Spokane, WA 99223, (509) 789-3540.

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Keeping schools safe

The run-up to this year's start of school had the usual appearance of routine, but it wasn't. In 14 Spokane area districts, a quiet, but powerful initiative began over the summer when NEWESD 101 officially launched a regional threat assessment cooperative.

While schools have been increasing security over many years, last year's shooting in Freeman created regional incentive for something more comprehensive, systemic and permanent than locked doors and security cameras.

Following a series of regional meetings and trainings, the 14 districts rallied behind the idea of forming a regional cooperative, directed by NEWESD 101, to implement Oregon's acclaimed Salem-Keizer Threat Assessment System.

Salem-Keizer is more than a step-by-step guide to enhanced school safety. Indeed, it is a way of thinking that addresses safety through an evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approach. It begins from the premise that policies written in response to violence can be ineffective, even counter-productive, because they are too often based on anger and emotion.

John Van Dreal, a school psychologist and safety/risk director who developed the program, argues that school safety is not achieved through the discipline code – through suspensions and expulsions – because such punitive measures leave aggressive students less supervised and more free to target other students and/or staff.

Rather, the Salem-Keizer model focuses on early interventions to keep students safe. The overriding aim is to prevent and defuse threats through a school and community based approach.

There are three primary objectives: 1) identify and assess potentially harmful or lethal behaviors and determine the action required; 2) organize resources and strategies to manage

threatening situations; and 3) maintain a sense of psychological safety for students, teachers and parents, allowing teaching and learning to occur without distraction or fear.

The first order of business for Leon Covington (see accompanying feature), who is directing the regional program for NEWESD 101, is to assist districts in creating Level 1 assessment teams.

Level 1 screenings, conducted at the school level, are a first line of action recommended for investigation and documentation of potential concerns about dangerous student activities, behaviors, ideation and/or communication.

Subsequent work will focus on Level 2 assessments, requiring more intense intervention through teams comprised of school personnel, law enforcement, public mental health, juvenile justice, state youth authorities and the courts.

The cooperative is funded, in part, through a \$90,000 harm reduction grant from Kaiser Permanente, \$15,000 from the Providence Community Foundation and \$10,000 from the Empire Health Foundation.

NEWESD 101 and the 14 districts extend their thanks to these outstanding community partners for their generous commitment to local schools. Together, we are making our region a state leader in school safety.

Participating districts:

Central Valley • Cheney • Deer Park • East Valley
Freeman • Great Northern • Liberty • Mead
Medical Lake • Nine Mile Falls • Orchard Prairie
Reardan-Edwall • Riverside • West Valley

Leon Covington: Pointing True North

Leon Covington found his *True North* 20 years before the term was made famous by a best-selling book on leadership.

Covington grew up in Inglewood, CA, in the heart of Greater Los Angeles. Then, graduating from high school at 17, the compass pointed him in a new direction – north to Price, Utah. There, a basketball scholarship awaited at what is now called Utah State University Eastern.

Two years later, offered a choice of scholarships at four-year institutions, he felt the strongest pull, again from the north. He packed his bags for Lewiston, ID, enrolling at Lewis-Clark State College as an Education and Social Science major.

His time in Lewiston was transformational. He found his calling during an internship with the Northwest Children's Home, a treatment center for abused, neglected and abandoned children. That led to a full-time job with the organization following his graduation in 1992.

Seven years later, a new opportunity beckoned. This time it was in Spokane, still further north, where he has built an impressive resume that includes work as a family and child counselor, trainer and clinical social worker.

Then in June, he took on a challenge – he calls it a tremendous opportunity – that is among the region's highest priority educational issues. As NEWESD 101's first-ever regional threat assessment coordinator, Covington is assisting 14 local districts in implementing the Salem-Keizer threat assessment model.

It's serious, ground-breaking work that will provide a valuable template for other counties and districts as the initiative moves forward.

In Covington, NEWESD 101 found the perfect candidate to launch the ship. He brings 25 years of experience and a serious, thoughtful approach, coupled with an easygoing manner and spry sense of humor.

Just how spry? Well, he quips, Spokane is probably the last stop on his northward trek, as he is running out of real estate this side of Canada. But it's a good thing, he says. As a kid growing up near The Forum, the one-time home of basketball's Los Angeles Lakers, he never developed much interest in hockey.



Leon Covington

Edilsa Mendoza

Edilsa Mendoza was a preschooler when she and two older sisters left an orphanage in Colombia, near the Equator in South America, bound for their new home in Washington state.

It was December. Her memory is of Eastern Washington being brutally cold and a place where the people spoke a strange language she had never heard before. Getting off the plane, she also saw something she had never seen before – the ground covered in a blanket of white. Welcome to America.

Gradually, the shock wore off. In time, the weather, language and culture became familiar and comfortable. The transformation started at home. The cold was melted by the warm hearts of the Bishop family of Garfield, WA, who had long dreamed of adopting a child. But upon learning of Edilsa and her sisters, the Bishops could not bear the thought of separating a family so they adopted all three.

Thus began a new life in Eastern Washington, where all three still live today. Edilsa, now a wife, mother and working professional, also is a member of the NEWESD 101 family. Three years ago, she joined the staff as a classified instructor at the Spokane County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) School.

She and her NEWESD 101 colleagues administer the JDC educational program for incarcerated youth ranging in age from 8-18. It is a unique teaching environment that requires a special mindset, temperament and sense of empathy.

“Many of the kids we see have a hard time trusting people because many adults have given up on them,” she says.

“If people don’t like them, or don’t want to be around them, they know it instantly. The key is to open your eyes and heart.”

She does just that, six hours per day, with a full load of English, Math and Transition classes.

While her own childhood circumstances were different from those of her students, she sees an important similarity in how to reach a person coming from a different place or experience. It all starts with opening your eyes and heart.



JDC Principal Larry Gardner discusses lesson plans with Edilsa Mendoza.

Dr. Tina Boogren, October 20

Renowned educator and speaker Dr. Tina Boogren comes to northeastern Washington October 20 for a full-day workshop directed to new teachers, mentors and others who support beginning teacher induction.

Boogren, who is part of Marzano Research, will share strategies and skills to create the most effective environments for new teachers to thrive. Participants will learn effective classroom management strategies and how to maintain positive relationships with students.

The registration deadline is September 25. For more information, contact Dianna Harrington at (509) 789-3605 or dharrington@esd101.net.

Drug Takeback events, October 20 & 27

In 2011, the state Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery launched the Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI) to provide substance abuse prevention services and strategies through local coalitions in high-need communities. Two such communities served by NEWESD 101 are the West Central and East Valley communities.

This fall, both communities will host drug takeback events providing citizens with information and resources on prescription medications, risks of suicide and safe ways to lock up home medications. The goal is distribute 400 lock boxes in each community.

West Central will host its event October 20 at the West Central Community Center from 10-3; East Valley, on October 27 at the CHAS Valley Clinic from 9-2. For more information, contact Annie Murphey at (509) 703-8756 or amurphey@esd101.net.

Clock hours: New price September 1

Effective September 1, 2018, the price of Washington state clock hours will increase from \$2 to \$3 per clock hour.

The new rate will apply to clock hours purchased in GoSignMeUp on or after this date, even if the credits were earned before September 1. It will be possible, however, to secure the old rate of \$2 per hour in some circumstances. NEWESD 101 will continue to honor the old rate if the request is received with a paper clock hour form showing \$2 pricing.

Be aware that individuals are responsible for keeping their own clock hours documentation for OSPI recertification, so we recommend either a paper file folder or an electronic one to retain your documents.

NEWESD 101 will be using GoSignMeUp again this year so be sure to keep your information current by updating any job changes, new email addresses, etc. Please do not create a new account if you cannot remember your password.