

WASA Leadership Listening Ideas: A Recipe for Building Support for Public Education

Creating and maintaining trust in public education is one of the most important leadership skills a superintendent can develop.

Right now, many school districts in Washington state are looking for meaningful ways to engage with their stakeholders to better understand their concerns about public education. We've heard from members that confidence in public schools is low right now.

Rather than doing a statewide poll or survey, which would yield generalized responses, we wanted to give you the tools to go out and build strong local relationships through a variety of listening activities. We also know people are stretched thin right now.

That's why WASA has created what we hope will serve as a recipe for building support for your schools in your community. The ingredients are found in every school district and can be used to create stronger community connections and deepen trust in K-12 education.

These resources were created to help you:

- Conduct activities that require minimal resources but generate authentic, meaningful, hyperlocal feedback
- Engage district central office and school administrators in strategic listening
- Build relationships with key stakeholders
- Create a clearer portrait of community concerns
- Set the tone for proactive, strategic planning efforts
- Increase confidence in public schools

As you will see, these are all low resource/high return options that are scalable to any size district.

The only thing more crucial than conducting a listening activity: acknowledging what you heard. Finding ways to keep the conversation going in your schools and district will be an essential part of your listening efforts. Be sure to share what you heard ("we listened, you said..."). This is an opportunity to identify what you heard and how it has shaped the decision you are making and your chosen path forward. This is how you rebuild public confidence in your district and in public education.

And as always, WASA is here to help. Please let us know if you have questions about anything you see in these materials and let us know how we can better serve you, as a school leader, in these efforts.

Sincerely,

Joel Aune