

HOTLINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



Advocacy

Dana Rosenbach writes about WASA's third pillar, advocacy.

Student Voices

Ron Banner details how listening to students has helped his district.

Saluting Excellence

Kathi Weight and Ben Ferney write about the WA State Purple Star Award.

WELCOME BACK

Welcome back to school! Join us as we look forward to the year ahead!

HOTLINE

IN THIS ISSUE OF

BACK TO SCHOOL WITH WASA!

As we step into the new school year, the sense of renewal and opportunity is palpable. The months ahead will be filled with challenges, but also the promise of continued growth and innovation as we collectively work to foster educational equity and excellence. Our focus remains on supporting every student's journey—ensuring that their unique needs are met and their voices are amplified.

In this edition of *Hotline*, we celebrate initiatives like the Washington State Purple Star Award, which honors schools dedicated to supporting military-connected families. We also dive into updates from the AASA and an overview of our MTSS Conference, which offers pathways to improving student outcomes through multi-tiered systems of support.

We are excited to introduce new WASA members and staff who will bring fresh perspectives and expertise to our mission of leadership, trust, and advocacy. Additionally, with our Next Level Leader Conference and a focus on empowering student voices, we're reminded that the work we do now shapes the future of public education and our broader democracy.

As we embark on this journey together, let's recommit to our shared goals of equity, leadership, and advocacy. The work we do is essential, and the impact we make will resonate for generations. Thank you for your dedication to advancing public education in Washington.

Thank you to Bob Maxwell, Joel Aune, Dana Rosenbach, Joey Castilleja, Dan Steele, Ron Banner, Kathi Weight, Ben Ferney, Michelle Whitney, Tim Garchow, Shawn Batstone, Kim Fry, Kaley VonVolkli, Heather Chard, and Bella Troiani for your contributions to this issue of *Hotline*.

Do you have an idea for our next *Hotline* issue?
Send an email to Bella Troiani at itroiani@wasa-oly.org.

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A CALL TO WASA MEMBERS

PURSUING AND PROMOTING LEGISLATION THAT SUPPORTS PUBLIC EDUCATION

During the 1994 school year, I transitioned from being a classroom teacher to an elementary assistant principal. During the early years of my administrative journey, I remember how I was confronted with unfunded mandates, and challenging legislative bills resulting in additional costs, all while trying my best to manage and balance funding requests for classroom materials, staffing, maintenance, and operations. I was great at complaining and expressing my frustration each year to my spouse, staff, and friends, and unfortunately that was about the extent of my professional responsiveness to education funding. As a young administrator, I always had a list of excuses of why I couldn't do more, I was busy with "administrative duties" and did not have time to get involved with educational advocacy, especially at the beginning of the school year when administrators are overwhelmed with so many requests and items to complete on the to-do list.

Fast forward to the present, and I have learned that there are always "administrative duties" and more things to be added to-do list. Most importantly, I come to understand that the best way to engage in educational advocacy is to move beyond complaining and act, by leaning in and identifying, pursuing, and promoting legislation that supports public education. I discovered that when I began writing letters, meeting with local legislative representatives, and testifying on various education related bills, I was utilizing my time and energy in a more meaningful and impactful way. I developed working relationships with various legislators that, in some cases, resulted in favorable language and/or support for critical education bills. You can also make a difference by sharing your stories, data, and examples of how bills support or are a barrier to school funding and operations with your local, state, and federal representatives.

I know the start of the school year is a busy time, however political campaigns are in full swing and draft bills will soon appear as the next legislative session is just around the corner. I encourage each of us to become involved in educational advocacy at some level and move beyond complaining to acting by speaking with your local legislative representatives and providing feedback on upcoming educational bills. Please reach out to other administrators and visit the WASA website for more information and [Washington School Funding](#) for resources that you can use to help advocate for your school, district, and public education.

Have a great start to the school year.



Bob Maxwell is WASA President and Superintendent of Pullman Public Schools.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As educational leaders, we are facing an unprecedented challenge: the increasing politicization of our schools and communities, particularly in this election season.

This issue goes beyond the classroom and community—it strikes at the heart of our democracy. But rather than shy away from these divisive times, schools are uniquely positioned to confront and seize opportunities that empower students to effectively wrestle with complex issues in their educational journey toward adulthood.

Schools are not just spaces for learning—they are the foundation of our democratic values. It is here that we introduce and reinforce the principles that sustain our democratic institutions and prepare students for civic life. In a time of political division and the overwhelming spread of misinformation—fueled in large part by biased media coverage—schools remain one of the few places where students can be taught how to discern fact from fiction. In fact, schools are places where students must be taught how to make the distinction between reliable information and misinformation.

Schools should play an essential role in fostering critical thinking, teaching students to assess information, identify credible sources, and navigate the increasingly complex landscape of AI-generated content and disinformation. Granted, these skills have always been the focus of good teaching. And yes, we know they are essential for the preservation of democracy.

However, this is a new day in America. We must ask ourselves: Have we lost the ability to engage in civil, thoughtful discourse? Are the divisions in this country beyond repair? Who or what can turn the tide? I believe public education can and must double down in our commitment to modeling and teaching our students how to embrace diverse perspectives and engage in substantive, sometimes difficult conversations that are respectful, even when spirited.

Are we fully committed to developing critical thinking skills, empathy, kindness, and respect? Is the system really teaching students to listen, to seek understanding rather than deepen division? As leaders of public schools, it is our duty to build this capacity in our students—because the future of our nation depends on it. The Founding Fathers believed that an educated citizenry was crucial to the sustainability and success of American democracy. They feared that without widespread education, citizens would be ill-equipped to participate in self-

governance, making democracy vulnerable to corruption, manipulation, and tyranny.

The stakes have never been higher, and public education is the key. School district leaders must continue to lead with purpose and conviction. Yes, this work is difficult. Yet if we are not leading, then someone else will. The work you do today in your schools will shape the future of our country. I implore you to keep striving to prepare students for a world that is increasingly complex and challenging—a world where our fragile democracy may be wobbling a bit.

As it always has, America's future will soon rest in the hands of the young people we have the privilege of educating. This is your leadership challenge—to sharpen their minds, instill in them the values of democracy, and equip them with the critical skills they need to navigate an increasingly complex world.

I have no doubt you are up to that challenge.

Respectfully,

G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director

2024-25 WASA Goals and Action Steps

WASA's goals and actions are deeply grounded in the Association's mission and fundamental principles of Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy. The formulation of these objectives and corresponding initiatives is significantly shaped by WASA's embraced Educational Equity Statement. Executive Director Joel Aune and his team exert dedicated efforts to execute each of these objectives consistently throughout the year.

Leadership

Cultivate transformative leaders who model and exert a visible and determined focus on educational equity to effectively lead public education in their communities.

Action A: Design and deliver professional learning (taking advantage of the rapid change in technology) for all component members supporting both individual leadership and systems-level improvement to ensure equity and excellence for each student.

Action B: Develop pathways for all district-level positions which attract leaders who reflect the diversity of our student populations.

Action C: Leverage the expertise within each administrator through collaboration with one another and our educational partners to address complex educational challenges.

Trust

Lead with integrity to build trust and advance cultural competency, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to achieve excellence in public education.

Action A: Further expand relationships with and among all members to elevate awareness and boost involvement in WASA, thereby developing and sustaining ethical, visionary leadership for public schools and the students in them.

Action B: From a position of equity, communicate and engage through words, actions, and deliverables to build a unified voice among all members, partner organizations, and the general public regarding the value of public education and a system where all students can learn and achieve their educational goals and aspirations.

Action C: Provide service, support, and leadership for all WASA members, state agencies, educational organizations, and other stakeholders to elevate the sense of belonging for all students and eradicate opportunity and achievement gaps that are a result of systemic inequities in our schools.

Advocacy

In alignment with our partners, amplify WASA's voice and influence to champion public education in an inclusive democracy so that each student achieves their educational goals and aspirations.

Action A: Provide leadership and support for ongoing relationships and engagement with legislators, our partners, and other policymakers to influence legislation and education policy that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to ensure opportunities for each student to achieve successful outcomes.

Action B: In a unified, compelling voice, advance, and influence budget and policy positions that support the provision of consistent, equitable, and ample resources to all school districts that will ensure fair treatment, equitable access, and opportunity for each student to achieve successful outcomes.

Action C: Actively influence federal policy to positively impact each student.

BLAST FROM THE PAST Hotline Thirteen Years Ago

Check out the October 2011 issue of *Hotline*, which included:

- **Focus on Education:** A statewide event to build trust and credibility between school districts and the community
- WASA's 2012 Legislative Platform
- 2011 WASA President Inaugural Reception
- Common Core Standards for ELA and Math

You can view this historical artifact and others on our [website](#). Throughout the year, we will continue to highlight and compare current issues and topics with those of the past.



WASA Mission Statement

The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) is an organization for professional administrators that is committed to Leadership:

Leadership in providing equity and excellence in student learning.

Leadership in developing competent, ethical, and visionary leaders by:

- Promoting community and legislative support for education.
- Providing member services.
- Offering growth opportunities for leaders.

WASA's beliefs are anchored in **Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy**. WASA is, first and foremost, about Leadership for equity and excellence for all students. WASA members exemplify Trust through competence, integrity, and vision. WASA's Advocacy efforts focus on building widespread support and a singular voice to secure the resources and policy necessary to advance public education in the state of Washington.

In this issue of *Hotline*, Superintendent Dana Rosenbach highlights the third pillar of WASA's Mission Statement—ADVOCACY.

As an experienced superintendent, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of effective legislative advocacy. For example, when legislators were developing a plan for regionalization of school funding, consistent advocacy resulted in a positive change to the funding level for our district. School superintendents are uniquely positioned to champion the needs of our schools at local, state, and national levels.

Local Advocacy: Building Strong Community Ties

At the local level, superintendents are the bridge between schools and the community. Engaging with local government officials, school boards, and community stakeholders is essential to address immediate needs and foster a supportive environment for students and staff. Local advocacy efforts can build support for broader advocacy efforts and lead to partnerships that enhance our schools. For example, our district is part of a coalition for conservation, education, and job creation by developing a fisheries enhancement program in the community.

State Advocacy: Addressing Systemic Challenges

State-level advocacy is critical for addressing broader, systemic issues that affect all school districts. In Washington, there is an urgent need for superintendents to engage in advocacy to ensure equitable and adequate funding for education. The WASA 2025 Legislative Platform highlights three key areas where state intervention is necessary:

1. Special Education: The 2025 Legislature must fully fund the cost of special education services. School districts have a legal obligation to serve all students with disabilities in Washington, regardless of the cost of services, yet they do not have the necessary resources to provide those services. Even with recent funding enhancements, the gap between school district expenditures for special education and related services substantially exceeds funding—and continues to grow. This gap requires districts to continue to use local

funding sources, including local levies, to cover necessary costs. To ensure school districts are provided with funding that reflects the actual costs of service delivery, the Legislature must increase special education tiered multipliers and remove the arbitrary enrollment funding cap.

2. Pupil Transportation: The 2025 Legislature must promptly fulfill its obligation to comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded. The intent of the current Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) is to allow the Legislature to allocate funding to districts that aligns with actual costs of providing school transportation services. Regardless of the intent, the STARS formula has consistently underfunded districts' actual pupil transportation expenditures. The STARS formula cannot forecast allocations with credible accuracy, calculates a final allocation in February which complicates budget decisions for school districts and the Legislature, and uses an efficiency rating that is detrimental to efficient districts because they are at risk of less funding in the model.

3. Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC): The 2025 Legislature must immediately address the significant underfunding of allocations for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC). While staffing represents the largest expense for school districts, there are many costs to running a school district which are non-staff related. The Legislature provides an allocation to cover these costs by providing for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC) at a specific rate per student; however, state funding for MSOC has not kept pace with actual school district costs. Liability insurance alone has increased over 100 percent in the last five years, while utility costs have increased more than 40 percent. Other costs, such as food and fuel, have also increased dramatically. Current per pupil rates for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs simply do not come close to matching costs of running a school district. These costs are increasing through no fault of school

districts, superintendents, or school boards and their decisions. When required costs of running a school district exceed state funding, local revenues—mostly levies—must be used to fill the gap, reducing local resources for school district and community expectations.

National Advocacy: Shaping Federal Education Policy

National advocacy allows superintendents to influence federal education policies that impact schools nationwide. Issues such as federal funding for education, standardized testing, and special education mandates require a unified voice from education leaders. By engaging with national organizations and participating in federal advocacy efforts, superintendents can help shape policies that promote equity and excellence in education.

The Power of Collective Advocacy

One of the most powerful aspects of advocacy is the ability to unite with other education leaders to amplify our voices. The WASA 2025 Legislative Platform emphasizes the importance of aligning school administrators and the education community to speak with one voice. By working together, superintendents can create a strong, cohesive advocacy network that can effectively influence policymakers at all levels. This collective effort is essential for addressing the complex challenges facing our schools and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, school superintendents play a vital role in advocating for the needs of our schools. By engaging in local, state, and national advocacy efforts, superintendents can help secure the resources and support necessary for providing high-quality education to all students. Together, we can create a brighter future for our schools and our students.



Dana Rosenbach, Superintendent of the North Mason School District, is a WASA Board member and serves on WASA's Legislation and Finance Committee.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY STATEMENT

WASA believes that Educational Equity, for each and every student, will be attained when barriers are removed throughout the system, ensuring equal access and opportunity for students to achieve successful outcomes. WASA will commit to providing vision, leadership, and support to district leaders as they take action to eradicate gaps that are a result of systemic inequities in our schools.



WASA's [Educational Equity Statement](#), adopted by the Board, articulates WASA's commitment to providing leadership while supporting superintendents and school district leaders as they lead for equity. WASA believes that Educational Equity for each and every student will be attained when barriers are removed throughout the system, ensuring equal access and opportunity for students to achieve successful outcomes.

The statement further defines cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion—all essential elements of educational equity. *In this issue of Hotline, Joey Castilleja, Mabton School District Superintendent, shares his thinking on inclusion...*

Inclusion as our Biggest Opportunity FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

As school leaders, we are entrusted with the significant responsibility of shaping environments where every student feels valued, respected, and included. Inclusion is not just about making sure that students with unique challenges have access to education—it is about creating a space where every student, regardless of background, identity, or ability, can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. As we embark on another school year, it's essential to remember that inclusion is more than a challenge to be managed; it is an opportunity to unlock the full potential of all our students!

Inclusion in schools goes beyond simply accommodating differences. It means fostering a culture where every student feels like they belong and where diversity is seen as a strength. This means acknowledging and embracing the unique perspectives, cultures, and experiences that each student brings to the classroom. When students feel seen and valued for who they are, they are more likely to engage with their learning, build positive relationships with peers, and develop the self-confidence necessary for success in school and beyond.

Why is inclusion so important? Research consistently shows that inclusive environments lead to better outcomes for all students. When students feel that they are part of a community and that their contributions are valued, they are more motivated to learn. In inclusive settings, students are also more likely to develop empathy, problem-solving skills, and a stronger sense of collaboration. Additionally, students who feel connected to their school community experience

fewer disciplinary issues, lower dropout rates, and higher academic achievement. In contrast, students who feel isolated or marginalized are more likely to struggle academically and socially.

For school superintendents and leaders, recognizing the importance of inclusivity is an opportunity to create conditions for student success. Rather than viewing inclusion as an added burden or a challenge to overcome, it should be embraced as a pathway to improving the educational experience for all students. When we focus on inclusion, we create a school culture that empowers every student to reach their full potential, fostering an environment that benefits everyone.

This year let's make a concerted effort to prioritize inclusion in our schools. While this may sound complex, there are several simple yet effective strategies we can implement to promote a more inclusive school environment. One approach is to integrate peer mentorship programs, where older or more experienced students help guide and support younger or less experienced peers. This not only helps students form positive relationships but also fosters a sense of belonging for both mentors and mentees.

Another strategy is to encourage student voice by regularly seeking feedback from students on how they experience the school environment. By creating platforms—such as student advisory groups, surveys, or town hall meetings—where students can share their thoughts and ideas, we allow them to actively participate in shaping

their school culture. This empowers students and ensures that their perspectives are reflected in school decision-making.

We can also make inclusion a priority in the classroom by ensuring that our curriculum materials reflect diverse perspectives and experiences. This could mean incorporating literature, history, and examples from a variety of cultural backgrounds, ensuring that students from all walks of life see themselves reflected in their learning. Additionally, providing staff with training on recognizing unconscious biases and building positive relationships with students will help create a more respectful, inclusive environment.

I urge us all not to overthink this! We all want our kids to feel at home at school. That is really what this is all about! By embracing inclusive practices, we can create schools where every student feels like they belong. In doing so, we open the door to greater equity, stronger relationships, and higher academic success. Let's seize this opportunity to make a meaningful impact on student lives and foster the kind of inclusive schools that will help every student thrive.



Joey Castilleja is Superintendent of the Mabton School District and serves on the WASA Board as Superintendent Component Chair.

State Superintendent of the Year[®] (SOY)

WASHINGTON SUPERINTENDENT *of the* YEAR 2024



LAURIE DENT

SUMNER-BONNEY
LAKE SD



The process for selecting the 2025 Washington Superintendent of the Year is now underway. The online application is available on the [AASA website](#). Each year, educational organizations across the United States recognize outstanding superintendents who have made significant contributions to their respective states. To be considered for Washington's Superintendent of the Year, the **application deadline is October 1, 2024.**

WASA will convene a diverse panel of judges to review and score the submitted applications to determine Washington's next Superintendent of the Year for 2025. The selected candidate from Washington State will be submitted to AASA for consideration as the 2025 AASA National Superintendent of the Year. AASA will announce the 2025 National Superintendent of the Year at the 2024 AASA National Conference on Education, taking place from March 6–8, 2025, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The selected superintendent's application will be submitted to the National Superintendent of the Year[®]. To submit an application or make a nomination, click [here](#). Questions? Contact [Joel Aune](#) or visit the AASA [website](#) for additional information.

New WASA Members

We've welcomed 84 new members since July 2024.

Our newest class of WASA members joins over 1,600 members from across Washington. Collectively, they represent diverse districts from every corner of the state.

Angel Cuenca, Auburn
Stephanie Earnhardt, Auburn
Scott McDaniel, Battle Ground
Erick Suksdorf, Battle Ground
Arionda Feeney, Bellingham
Melissa Munson-Merritt, Bethel
Keith Yaich, Blaine
Jennifer Hernandez, Bremerton
Teneka Morley-Short, Bremerton
Ryan Nickels, Bremerton
Bonny Theis, Brewster
Sheree Gomez-Clark, Camas
Cheryl Erickson, Cape Flattery
Amy Archuleta, Central Kitsap
Scott McDaniel, Central Kitsap
Jennifer Chase, Central Valley
Laura Lindley, Central Valley
Shannon Leatherwood, Coupeville
Jeremy Wheatley, Dayton
Paula Dawson, Dieringer
Dawn Bushyeager, East Valley - Spokane
Mathew Orndorff, East Valley - Spokane
Steven Stoker, Enumclaw
Aaron Cummings, Ephrata
Kenneth Murray, Ephrata
Emily Nelson, ESD 105
Erin Lucich, ESD 112

Michael Paquette, ESD 113
Robert Bryant, Federal Way
Jessica Morgan, Federal Way
Juan Gandara-Vera, Franklin Pierce
Rosa Aviles, Grandview
Stephanie Funk, Grandview
Erinn Bennett, Highline
Daniel Calderon, Highline
Holly Ferguson, Highline
Kisa Hendrickson, Highline
Tove Tupper, Highline
Meredith Von Trapp, Highline
Stephanie King, Issaquah
Luisa Sanchez-Nilsen, Issaquah
Karla Shannon-Garvey, Issaquah
Wesley Benjamin, Kalama
Thomas Brillhart, Kennewick
Brittany Mercer, Kennewick
Chelsea Venegas, Kennewick
Shannon Hughes, Lamont
Kari Montgomery, Longview
Brady Smith, Lopez Island
Jeff Naslund, Mead
Weston Lucas, Mercer Island
Melissa Robertson, Mercer Island
Kimberly Thompson, Morton
Mitchell Thompson, Moses Lake

Richard Zimmerman, North Beach
Mike Merlino, North Kitsap
Megan Sawicki, North Kitsap
Angela Wageman, North Kitsap
Daniel King, North Mason
Marta Bloomquist, NWESD 189
Donald Fraser, NWESD 189
Michelle Roper, NWESD 189
Michelle Blackmon, OESD 114
Marci Bannan, Orting
Cliff Fries, Orting
Joshua Meek, Othello
Laura Jones, Pasco
Katie Fosnick, Puyallup
Stephanie Glenisky, Puyallup
Jennifer Farmer, Renton
Theresa Burch Finley, Republic
Jeff Cochran, Selah
Andrea Zier, Snoqualmie
Benjamin Gauyan, Stanwood-Camano
Colin Ryan, Stanwood-Camano
Kari Terjeson, Steilacoom
Benjamin Gauyan, Stanwood-Camano
Ruthie Althaus, Tacoma
Herman Lartigue, Tahola
Meagan Dawson, Tumwater
Tawnya Martinez-Halliday, Warden
Amy Low, White River
Tye Churchwell, Wishram
Kendall McNutt, Yelm



ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATION

The Push for Full Funding in 2025

As a new school year gets underway, students return to classes, eager to learn, and staff have renewed energy, ready to impart knowledge.

Along with this positive, optimistic air, there is also a lingering doubt regarding the sustainability of school districts' finances. This past spring, multiple districts across the state dealt with budget deficits—and there is a fear another round of budget cuts will be coming as districts prepare for the 2025–26 school year next spring.

To be certain, the fiscal challenges currently facing districts is not an isolated situation in a few areas. School districts across the state—big and small, east and west, urban and rural—have dealt with financial difficulties. The underlying reason so many districts are struggling is directly related to funding—or the lack of funding—due to legislative decisions. It is abundantly clear that K–12 education is the state's constitutional paramount duty, yet for the past few years, the Legislature has focused on other priorities and neglected to provide the required ample funding to school districts. Without legislative action in the coming session, continued budget cuts will be required, which will start to erode our children's educational opportunities.

This year, WASA is determined to take a strong stand (stronger and more aggressive than ever) in the 2025 Legislative Session.

While WASA has always advocated for ample and equitable funding for our schools, our pleas in recent years have fallen on deaf ears. This year, WASA, led by its Legislation & Funding Committee and supported by the WASA Board, is determined to take a strong stand (stronger and more aggressive than ever) in the 2025 Legislative Session. The first step was to adopt a Legislative Platform that is very narrowly focused on necessary education funding. WASA's [2025 Legislative Platform](#) urges the Legislature to step up and fully fund Special Education, Materials, Supplies & Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation.

The so-called “Big Three” were chosen as our singular focus for two specific, compelling reasons. One, any success on these issue we achieve in 2025 will positively impact ALL 295 school districts and automatically serves to unify WASA members. Two, each of these issues is a Basic Education program, constitutionally required to be amply funded; however, there is clear, documented evidence that none are fully funded.

While WASA stands ready to advance these priorities, school administrators need to engage in the fight. In fact, we believe other educators—and parents and other community members—also need to engage. WASA has partnered with AESD and we have been meeting with the other education associations in an effort to recruit them to support our deliberately narrow and focused Platform.

As this Coalition is being built, WASA (with support from ESD 112) created an education funding website, located at: www.waschoolfunding.org. The website provides useful—and easy to understand—information on the current funding dilemma so many school districts currently face. This website is intended to be “informational” and not a specific advocacy tool, so we encourage you to share this with your school board, parents, and community members.

In addition to the funding website, we have also built a [Tool Kit](#)—with talking points, videos, social media content, and other communication resources—to assist and align our members as you engage with your own legislators. Our effort is to ensure WASA—and our partners—speak with one voice as much as possible. We encourage you to use the resources in the Tool Kit to join your colleagues and members of the other education associations in advocating for WASA's 2025 Platform.

Remember, it is never too early to engage with your legislators. During the interim between sessions is when they have time for deeper and more meaningful conversations. Jumpstart your advocacy for 2025 by building your relationships now and influence their thinking before they craft their own priorities for next session. And because this is an election year, we encourage you to meet with both incumbents and challengers.

In order for our 2025 advocacy effort to succeed, we need school administrators—in concert with other educators—to fully engage in the legislative process. We understand, however, some of you may be new to advocacy, or you simply might not be comfortable engaging in the legislative arena. To help you ease into your advocacy role—especially if you have not engaged in the process before—WASA will provide tools, best practices, and resources to support your advocacy.

One of those supports is our [“Finding Your Voice” Legislative Advocacy Lunch & Learn series](#). There are three components to the series. We encourage you to participate in all three webinars; however, each presentation provides distinct information, so attending all three webinars is not essential—or required. The webinars: will review WASA's 2025 Platform (September 25); will be an advocacy training program (October 25); and will provide a preview of the 2025 Legislative Session (December 11). Each Lunch & Learn webinar will be presented 12:00–1:00 p.m., via Zoom. The webinars are complimentary; however, you must register to attend. [Click HERE](#) for more details and to register for the series.



Dan Steele is WASA Assistant Executive Director of Government Relations.

The Meaning Behind the Logo

The WASA Logo, adopted by the Board in 2021, is a representation of the three foundational pillars of WASA—Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy, along with a commitment to Equity that threads through all we do at WASA. The color blue represents trustworthiness, maturity, security, and reliability, while gold promotes optimism and hope. The gradient effect shows movement both forward and upward as we envision a future full of possibility for WASA and for you.



WASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



WASA Board Members during their June meeting in Spokane.

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Region 114: Erin Prince, Central Kitsap
Region 123: Pete Peterson, Kiona-Benton City
Region 171: Nik Bergman, Quincy

A WASA Welcome to Our Newest Team Members!

WASA is excited to welcome Tim Garchow to our leadership team! With over 20 years of experience as an educational leader at the local, state, and national levels, Tim brings a deep understanding of K-12 education and a passion for supporting school administrators. Tim's extensive work, including his leadership at WSSDA, and his dedication to advancing educational equity and supporting superintendents, make him a perfect fit for his new role. We are confident that his vision and expertise will further strengthen our efforts to support our members and champion public education across Washington. Welcome aboard, Tim!



WASA is excited to welcome Shawn Batstone to our leadership team! Shawn brings a wealth of experience, having served as the Assistant Superintendent for Tumwater School District and Superintendent of Hood Canal School District. His dedication to promoting equity and inclusion, fostering data-driven decision-making, and supporting the professional development of district leaders aligns perfectly with WASA's mission. Shawn's passion for collaboration and creating opportunities for growth and excellence will be a tremendous asset to our members. We are thrilled to have Shawn on board and look forward to his contributions. Welcome to the team, Shawn!



MEET THE STAFF

EXECUTIVE OFFICE



JOEL AUNE

Executive Director

Joel has been with WASA since 2018. Prior to this, Joel served as Superintendent for 20 years in the Snoqualmie Valley and Colfax School Districts. He also previously served as an elementary principal in the Walla Walla SD and as an assistant principal and teacher in the Cashmere SD, where he began his career in 1983. In 2011, Joel was elected WASA President.



DOMINIQUE WILSON

Executive Assistant

Dominique joined the WASA team in September 2024. Before joining WASA, Dominique acted as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community Liaison for the Tumwater School District.



BELLA TROIANI

Website, Communications, and Production Assistant

Bella joined the WASA team in October 2021. Prior to joining WASA, Bella had several years of experience with WSU and Washington State RCW.

ACCOUNTING



EVE JOHNSON

Business & Infrastructure Manager

Eve has capably served at WASA for over 35 years, since joining the staff in 1985.



KALEY VONVOLKLI

Accounting Assistant

Kaley started at WASA in March 2022. Prior to coming to WASA, Kaley worked as an Accounting and Card Servicing Specialist. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in June 2022.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING & MEMBERSHIP



SHAWN BATSTONE

Assistant Executive Director

Shawn joined the WASA Staff in July 2024, after serving as Assistant Superintendent in the Tumwater School District since 2019. Prior to that, Shawn was superintendent for nine years in the Hood Canal School District. His leadership background also includes time as Director of Teaching and Learning in the Yelm Community Schools, and experience as a principal and assistant principal.



KIM FRY

Assistant Executive Director

Kim brings 32 years of experience in education to WASA, most recently 12 years as superintendent of the Rochester School District. During the course of her career, Kim served as a first grade teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent. Kim started at WASA in 2022.



RYAN HICKERSON

Professional Learning Assistant

Ryan joined the WASA staff in August 2023. Ryan earned a Bachelor's degree in Education, after which he proudly served in the U.S. Navy as a Training Program Manager for five years.



BEAU WILSON

Professional Learning and Innovation Assistant

Beau joined the WASA team in August 2024 after serving as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community Liaison for the Tumwater School District.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS



DAN STEELE

Assistant Executive Director

Dan has served as WASA's Governmental Relations lead since 2011. He has many years of varied legislative experience, including service as the executive director of the Washington Student Lobby, a statewide organization that advocates on behalf of Washington's public university students, and as a legislative assistant with the Washington State Senate. Prior to joining WASA, Dan served the state's locally elected school board members for over 13 years with the WSSDA.



HEATHER CHARD

Administrative Assistant

Heather joined WASA in November 2023, and comes to us most recently from Nisqually Red Wind Casino.

MEMBER SERVICES & ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS



TIM GARCHOW

Assistant Executive Director

Tim joined WASA in July 2024, after serving for eight years as Executive Director of the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA).



NATALIE PLOTT

Office Assistant

Natalie joined the WASA staff in September 2023. She earned her Associate's Degree in 2014 and worked as a Resource Paraprofessional for six years in the Olympia School District.

"Real Talk"

EMPOWERING STUDENT VOICES THROUGH THE SUPERINTENDENT'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

In 2019, I initiated a groundbreaking program in the district aimed at fostering student engagement and promoting equitable practices within our district. The Superintendent's Youth Advisory Council (SYAC) was established under the capable leadership of our Equity and Community Engagement Director, Grant Twyman, and his dedicated team. This initiative, launched during the first year of my superintendency, has been pivotal in creating a direct communication channel between students and the superintendent, ensuring that student voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process.

The foundation of the SYAC is built on the concept of "Real Talk," where students have the opportunity to advise me on issues that are important to them, as well as provide input on matters where I sought their perspective. In our first year, the council was three satellite groups of approximately 15 students from each of our comprehensive high schools. Each school's administrative team was tasked with nominating a diverse group of students, representing all grades, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, and varying academic and behavioral performances, embodying the principle of inclusivity.

My approach was one of mutual engagement and open dialogue. I assured students, "I am not running for ASB office, so I will not be promising you ice cream machines in every class, but I will promise that I will listen to you with an open mind, engage in discussion with you and carry your message forward from my position of leadership in the district." This commitment to authentic listening and the empowerment of student voices has been a cornerstone of the SYAC's success, building trust and credibility between students and district leadership.

Throughout its first year, the SYAC tackled a range of significant topics, including the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the provision of wireless devices and connectivity, the transition to virtual classrooms, and strategies for returning to in-person learning. These discussions were instrumental in shaping the district's policies and actions during a challenging time.



In its second year, the SYAC evolved to become one large meeting (rather than three satellite meetings in the schools) with representatives from all high schools, including our alternative learning environment program. This consolidation allowed for a more comprehensive and unified approach to addressing student concerns and initiatives. Over the last five years, students consistently reported the sense of empowerment and satisfaction after seeing their voice/feedback shape district policies, procedures, and staff development.

Students consistently reported the sense of empowerment and satisfaction after seeing their voice/feedback shape district policies, procedures, and staff development.

During the 2023-24 school year, the council expanded its focus to incorporate six different community service projects, including: mental health resources, financial literacy support, and fentanyl awareness. A significant achievement this past year was securing a monetary grant from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to support fentanyl awareness initiatives. This led to the production of four student-led videos on fentanyl awareness, which will be instrumental in educating middle and high school students across the district. These videos have garnered attention at local, state, and federal levels, and have been shared with various school districts to enhance their educational efforts on this critical issue.

As we move forward, the SYAC will continue to be a vital platform for student engagement, supported by funding from the Learning from Leaders award. This ensures that students will have the resources they need to choose impactful topics and use their voices to effect positive change within their community and school district. Our district, our community, and our region has benefited immensely from the voices and leadership of these students. The SYAC stands as a testament to the power of student empowerment and the importance of listening to the voices of our youth.



Ron Banner, Superintendent of the Clover Park School District, is the first-ever recipient of the WASA Learning from Leaders Award.



AASA GOVERNING BOARD

REPRESENTATIVES IN ACTION

Washington state is fortunate to have strong representation on the AASA Governing Board with Ron Banner, James Everett, Michelle Whitney, Erin Prince, and Wade Smith serving as your elected representatives. With their three-year terms, they actively shape AASA's decisions and advocate for the needs of public education on your behalf. Additionally, Krestin Bahr, a longtime Governing Board member, has been elected to the AASA Executive Committee, further amplifying Washington's voice on critical national issues affecting public education.



Ron Banner
Clover Park SD



James Everett
Meridian SD



Michelle Whitney
Pasco SD



Erin Prince
Central Kitsap SD



Wade Smith
Walla Walla PS



Krestin Bahr
Peninsula SD

AASA Update

HIGHLIGHTS FROM AASA LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

In July, your AASA Governing Board representatives attended the AASA Legislative Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. with superintendent delegates from across the nation focused on learning about and advocating for AASA's federal legislative platform with representative from Congress.

AASA's federal legislative platform is centered around five (5) major goals:

1. Supporting Formula Funding and Equitable Distribution of Dollars

AASA's main federal priority is securing adequate Title I and IDEA funding through formula-based distribution, not competitive grants. This year, AASA and Governing Board representative focused on educating Congress about the need to update these funding formulas and prioritize them over competitive grants.

2. Alleviating Teacher and Staffing Shortages

AASA is focused on advocating for loan forgiveness for educators, new federal funding for grow-your-own and teacher residency programs, and supporting bills to address shortages in bus drivers, mental health professionals, and teachers, recognizing that school districts are in crisis mode.



3. Enhancing District Technology Infrastructure and Student Data Privacy

AASA supports legislation for flexible federal resources to ensure equitable access to affordable broadband and school-based internet through E-Rate to better support student connectivity both in and out of school, especially for our most vulnerable youth and families. They are also working with federal agencies to ensure comprehensive, well-funded responses to cybersecurity threats and student data privacy.

4. Increasing Access to School-Based Mental Health Services

The youth mental health crisis demands urgent resources. AASA strongly advocates for leveling the playing field in competitive funding, ensuring that all districts can adequately support the mental health of their students and educators. The future well-being of our youth depends on equitable access to these vital supports.

5. Reducing Federal Data Collection Requests

While AASA appreciates Congress's support during the pandemic and understands the need for ESSER spending reports, 4 million man-hours required this year for data collection is excessive. Data requests need simplified, focusing on essential information for civil rights and fiscal accountability, to avoid overburdening district personnel.

Your AASA Governing Board representatives are honored to serve and are committed to advocating for equity and elevating every learner. Through their work at the AASA's Legislative Advocacy Conference, critical issues being amplified, and Washington State's needs are being represented to drive positive change at the national level.



Michelle Whitney, former WASA President, is Superintendent of the Pasco School District.

Saluting Excellence

WASHINGTON'S PURPLE STAR AWARD

Schools in Washington state support many military families, including active-duty members, reservists, and veterans. To address the unique challenges faced by military-connected students, the 2023 Legislature established the Purple Star Award Program. Jointly administered by OSPI and WASA, this initiative recognizes school districts committed to military-friendly practices.

To earn the Purple Star Award, districts must provide resources that support the educational, social, and emotional needs of military families while offering professional development for staff. The application process for the 2025 Purple Star Award will open later this fall.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



WASA
EQUITY LEADERSHIP TRUST ADVOCACY



Supporting Military Communities

REFLECTIONS FROM STEILACOOM HISTORICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

When I stepped into the role of superintendent, I was unprepared for the intense sense of pride that comes with leading a school district. Especially in a military-connected community. Being part of a team that supports our military-connected community is an absolute privilege and the initial sense of pride I felt 12 years ago just continues to grow stronger.

Steilacoom Historical School District neighbors Joint-Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) is the largest Army-led joint base in the United States. As a school system supporting over 40 percent military-connected students, we consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have these resilient young people in our schools.

SHSD prioritizes strong relationships in order to foster the cognitive, social, and emotional development of each student. We care deeply about the hearts and the minds of our learners, and the Purple Star designation highlights our dedication to supporting our military-connected families.

Besides all of the amazing programs aimed at ensuring a strong sense of belonging for military-connected students transitioning into our schools, we are extremely grateful for the opportunities we receive to directly impact students' academic trajectory.

SHSD has been awarded several Department of Defense Educational Activity (DoDEA) grants to support innovative programs that benefit all learners. DoDEA grants aim to enhance educational outcomes, reduce achievement gaps, and offer academic programs for districts with a high number of military-connected students. The District currently manages two DoDEA grants: one focused on the expansion of world language course offerings for students and another dedicated to early literacy enrichments in K-5. Our early literacy grant has allowed us to establish after-school Literacy Labs at our elementary schools, provide explicit and systematic phonics professional development for staff, and offer dyslexia

certification for teachers through a partnership with Pacific University. In the first year of this incredible instructional initiative, we saw K-4 literacy scores increase by over 7 percent.

Our military-connected students bring so much joy to our schools and the unique support we receive as a military-connected community allows our school system to be innovative in addressing the social-emotional and academic needs of our students. We are grateful for our supportive community and appreciate these valuable opportunities, which directly benefit our students.



Kathi Weight is Superintendent of the Steilacoom Historical School District.

Honoring Our Military Families

At Cheney Public Schools, we deeply value our military families' significant contributions and sacrifices. Nearly seven percent of our students come from military backgrounds, including active-duty personnel stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base, and we recognize the unique challenges and rewards of serving our country.

Transitioning to a new duty station can be challenging, involving relocation, adjusting to new surroundings, and navigating changes in schools and communities. Our commitment is to provide consistent support during these transitions.

It is not just about education; it is about creating an environment where every child can thrive both academically and emotionally.

The Purple Star Award is a testament to our dedication to serving military-connected students with the highest level of care and excellence. It reflects our efforts to create a smooth and welcoming transition into our schools, offering resources and support for military families. From staff ready to assist with enrollment and educational continuity to programs designed to build a sense of belonging, Cheney Public Schools is dedicated to making every military family feel valued and supported.



Ben Ferney is Superintendent of the Cheney School District.

Shaun Carey to Lead WASA as President in 2025–26

WASA extends heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Shaun Carey on his election as WASA President-Elect for 2024–25!

As the superintendent of Enumclaw School District and an active WASA member since 2012, Shaun has demonstrated leadership, dedication, and advocacy for public education. His years of service, including roles on the WASA Board of Directors and various

committees, have earned him deep respect across the entire state. There is no doubt that Shaun will continue to lead with integrity and passion, driving forward WASA's mission. Congratulations, Shaun, on this well-deserved achievement.

[Learn more about WASA's newest President-elect and read the entire Press Release here.](#)



Congratulations, Shaun!

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP CHAIR The Importance of WASA Membership

As the WASA Membership Committee Chair, I am excited to welcome you to a community that is dedicated to empowering school administrators across Washington State. Our organization stands as a key source of support, providing essential resources designed to help you navigate your leadership journey.

By becoming a member of WASA, you gain access to a variety of valuable resources designed to enhance your leadership skills. Whether it's through our professional learning sessions, access to vital information, or the network of fellow administrators, WASA is here to support you every step of the way.

Your membership also places you at the heart of advocacy efforts that shape the future of public education in our state. Together, we are a powerful collective voice, working to influence policy and secure the resources necessary for our schools to thrive.

I sincerely believe in WASA and those who make up its membership! I personally consider my WASA membership a strategic part of my work as a school administrator. I encourage you to consider it a part of yours, too. We look forward to welcoming you to this great network of leaders.

Maximize Your Leadership Potential with WASA Membership

WASA membership delivers exceptional value for superintendents and school district leaders, providing essential resources and support to elevate your professional journey.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Stay at the forefront of educational leadership with WASA's quality professional development programs. Our conferences, workshops, and leadership academies are tailored to help you grow and succeed.

Access to Critical Information

Remain informed and updated with our communication channels. From our website and monthly newsletters to social media alerts and podcasts, WASA ensures you have the latest updates on educational trends, legislative activities, and more.

Bargaining Resources

Confidently navigate negotiations with WASA's comprehensive Bargaining Manual and access to up-to-date district agreements and expert presentations.

Government Relations

Join a collective voice advocating for public education. WASA's legislative team keeps you informed and engaged with key legislative developments affecting Washington's schools.

Individual Assistance

Receive personalized support for administrative issues, employment concerns, and problem-solving from experienced WASA staff.

Legal Services and Liability Insurance

Protect yourself with a \$1M Educators Professional Liability Policy, along with access to legal assistance for professional matters.

Exclusive Resources

Tap into members-only resources, including specialized communications, bargaining tools, and superintendent contracts.

Networking and Leadership Opportunities

Connect with a network of educational leaders across the state. Engage in targeted networking through WASA's component groups and expand your influence within the education community.

National Affiliation with AASA

Enhance your membership benefits through our partnership with AASA, including access to legal support and discounts on national conferences.

Be a Part of a Proactive Community

WASA is dedicated to advancing quality education through professional leadership. Join us and contribute to an organization that prioritizes leadership training, legislative advocacy, and collaboration to support Washington State's school administrators.

Invest in your leadership with WASA—where your growth and success are our top priorities.



Joey Castilleja is Superintendent of the Mabton School District and serves on the WASA Board as Superintendent Component Chair.

Honoring WASA Past-President

CELEBRATING MIKE VILLARREAL

On August 8, Mike Villarreal was celebrated for his outstanding leadership as WASA President for 2023-24 at a special reception in Seabrook. Surrounded by family, board members, Hoquiam School District staff, and WASA staff, Mike was recognized for his remarkable leadership and contributions to WASA and our members. A special thanks to our reception sponsors Beresford, Gaggle, McKinstry, OAC Services, and Piper Sandler. Mike, your exemplary leadership and unwavering dedication to WASA and the 1,600 members we serve have made a lasting impact. You truly embody the spirit of WASA and the superintendency, and we are grateful for all you've done.



Thank you to our sponsors!



THANK YOU, DIAMOND SPONSORS

At WASA, our commitment to providing high-quality service for our members is made possible through the generosity and support of our corporate sponsors. However, their contributions extend beyond funding events, conferences, and workshops. Our sponsors are true partners, dedicated to creating meaningful relationships with our members. Thank you for being such an essential part of our mission. We are grateful for your partnership and the impact we achieve together!



PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WASA places a high priority on supporting its members 24 hours a day. WASA executives are experienced, professional colleagues who are available to advise members on situations related to their roles as education leaders. Active WASA members are eligible to access the following through our Professional Assistance Program:

- Advice and Legal Counsel
- Legal Services
- Ethics Assistance
- Conflict Intervention
- Contract Review
- Mentorship

Questions? Please contact Tim Garchow. Tim can be reached at 360.489.3646 or by email at tgarchow@wasa-oly.org.

Empowering Leadership

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NEXT LEVEL LEADERS



At the summer Next Level Leaders event in Yakima, educational leaders explored strategies to drive the progress of their schools and districts.

The sessions included opportunities to strengthen leadership practices through protocols and AI prompts, empowering participants to increase leadership self-awareness. A highlight was the focus on incorporating student voices into policy development, as demonstrated by the Yakima School District, which showcased how student voice is used to promote educational engagement, academic achievement, self-growth, and civic participation. Attendees also utilized frameworks like the Leadership Paradigm and the inquiry cycle "placemat" to reflect and plan purposeful next steps, reinforcing the commitment to creating inclusive and collaborative educational environments.



SEPTEMBER 2024

NEWS

The WASA News is a monthly publication that provides key information to you in a concise, quick-read format. We hope you find WASA News to be an efficient way to keep abreast of new information, emerging issues, and timely resources. Be reminded that previous issues of the WASA News can be found on our [website](https://www.wasa-oly.org).

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
— George Bernard Shaw

Dear WASA Members,

Congratulations to all of you on the start of a new school year! A successful launch doesn't happen by chance, as it requires the intentional planning and preparation of superintendents, district leaders, and principals. And while these efforts often go unnoticed—after all, it's your job to make it all come together seamlessly—I commend you for your leadership. The WASA team deeply appreciates the time, energy, and leadership you've devoted to ensuring the first days of school have been positive and enjoyable for students, staff, and parents alike. Your efforts thus far, and throughout the coming year, are essential to ensuring **customer success** for the students, staff, and parents in your community.

In our effort to ensure "customer success" in the weeks and months to come, one of WASA's key priorities for the coming year will be to raise member awareness of the resources and supports WASA has to offer you. To that end, I want to highlight the various channels through which WASA shares information and maintains regular communication with you and your colleagues:

- **WASA News:** Our monthly publication provides concise and efficient updates to keep you informed. For those seeking more in-depth information, embedded links offer additional details.
- **WASA Hotline:** Published quarterly, the Hotline updates you on WASA's priorities, initiatives, field-related news, and other topics of interest and value.
- **Social Media:** Stay connected with us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/wasaoly), [X](https://x.com/wasaoly) (formerly Twitter), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/wasaoly) for real-time updates on WASA and its esteemed members!
- **Matters Legislative:**
 - "This Week in Olympia" (TWIO) is our weekly newsletter delivering timely news and insights from the legislative session.
 - Assistant Executive Director Dan Steele also hosts a concise and informative **weekly podcast** during the legislative session. Sign up today for access to this podcast.
- **WASA Website:** Our website serves as a user-friendly hub for information and resources tailored to WASA members.

Have you read the latest WASA News?

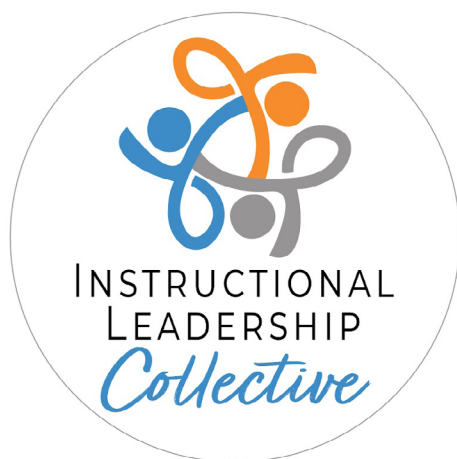
WASA News is a monthly publication providing our members with the newest information and resources for school administrators, central office leaders, principals, and superintendents. Learn more about our organization, along with helpful events, articles, and trainings to benefit you and your district! Read this month's WASA News to find out all about:

- Apply for Superintendent of the Year
- AI Innovation Summit
- Coming Soon: WASAbot.AI!
- Preparing for the 2025 Legislative Session
- WASA Management Reviews

Interested in receiving WASA's monthly newsletter delivered directly to your inbox? Email itroiani@wasa-oly.org to join our mailing list.

Elevate Your Leadership Impact

JOIN THE GLOBAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP NETWORK



We invite you to join the **Global Instructional Leadership Network**, an interactive and collaborative community designed specifically for educational leaders who are focused on deepening their impact.

This network offers a unique opportunity to explore key areas of instructional leadership, including collective efficacy and the process of collaborative inquiry, through a series of nine engaging virtual sessions structured to maximize your learning and leadership development.

Each session will include dedicated processing time with peers, personal learning to lead learning, and practical protocols that will help you apply new insights in your schools and districts.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the Global Instructional Leadership Network.



Take-Aways From MTSS Conference



The 2024 Integrated MTSS Conference, themed “Empowering Excellence: Co-Designing Systems through Instructional Leadership,” brought together educators, administrators, and experts to explore innovative strategies in Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) through a lens of equity and instructional leadership.

Keynote speakers, including Alexandria Harvey, inspired attendees with insights on engaging families and communities in meaningful and authentic ways. The event featured a series of concurrent sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities designed to foster collaboration and empower participants to co-design educational systems that promote student success.



Alexandria Harvey
Senior Program Associate with Special Education Policy and Practice, WestEd

School Information and Research Service (SIRS)



As the Assistant Executive Director of WASA, I'm excited to share with you the benefits of our School Information and Research Service (SIRS).

SIRS is a vital resource for Washington State public school districts, educational service districts, and public educational management and leadership associations. By becoming a member, your district or organization gains access to a wealth of information designed to support and enhance educational leadership and management. The annual membership fee for school districts is based on student FTE.

One of the key benefits of SIRS membership is our Leadership Information Articles. These monthly and quarterly publications provide up-to-date research and insights into the best practices currently shaping educational settings. We are proud to partner with Hanover Research to deliver this invaluable resource, helping you stay informed and effective in your leadership roles.

Another significant resource is the Legislative Handbook, an annual guide that equips school administrators and educators with detailed information about the Washington State Legislature. This handbook is a must-have tool. Our SIRS Salary Survey Report offers comprehensive data on salaries and benefits for

school employees across the state. This report, exclusive to SIRS members, is fully customizable and serves as a critical reference for making informed decisions about compensation.

If your district is not yet a member, I encourage you to reach out to me, Tim Garchow, at tgarchow@wasa-oly.org or by phone at 360.489.3646.

Let's work together to empower our schools with the best information and resources available.

About SIRS



Find out more about the benefits of becoming a SIRS member district.

SIRS is a non-profit organization that provides data and information on school organization, administration, operation, finance, and instruction to specifically meet the needs of superintendents, central office administrators, principals, and schoolboard members. SIRS contracts with WASA for management services. Andy Wolf, WASA's Assistant Executive Director for Administrative Services, serves as the SIRS Executive Director.

LEADERSHIP INFORMATION (LI)

LI is a series of monthly and quarterly articles that will help to shape and inform your educational leadership practice. These articles contain relevant school information research on the best practices being utilized in today's educational setting. SIRS has partnered with Hanover Research to provide this service to our members.

SIRS SALARY SURVEY REPORTS

SIRS annually compiles and publishes a timely salary-and-benefits report of Washington's school employees in three parts: 1) administrators, 2) classified personnel, and 3) teachers. Only SIRS members can access the full online surveys. The Excel spreadsheets allow members to create specialized reports by grouping information for any position from any size district.

SIRS LEGISLATIVE HANDBOOK

SIRS Legislative Handbook is an annual guide to the Washington State Legislature. It provides school administrators and professional associations with information about our state government, including directories, website links and email addresses, legislative maps, and much more. The handbook is a valuable tool for participating effectively in the legislative process.

It is also an excellent addition to social studies classrooms and school libraries. The handbook is available online to SIRS members and can be downloaded and distributed to your staff.

SEPTEMBER REMINDERS

Connect with Us

Be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#) for information on upcoming conferences and workshops, legislative news and updates, and school news.

Update Your Profile

If you haven't already, please help us keep our membership directory up to date by taking a moment to upload your photo to your WASA member profile page. Contact Heather Chard at hchard@wasa-oly.org if you have questions or need assistance.



Staff Spotlight

FEATURING HEATHER CHARD



In this issue, we're proud to spotlight our Government Relations Administrative Assistant, Heather Chard. Heather joined WASA in November 2023.

Heather is efficient and proficient in her work, but she also knows how to laugh and have fun. She is really good at anticipating what I (or others) need and she is the ultimate team player, always being one of the first to volunteer to assist a colleague.

—Dan Steele
Assistant Executive Director, Government Relations

What is your role at WASA?

I am the Government Relations Administrative Assistant for Dan Steele but jump in wherever needed.

What does your job entail?

My main duties consist of helping with *TWIO* (*This Week in Olympia*), help with coordinating Leg & Finance Committee meetings and SIRS Board meetings, upload weekly podcasts created by Dan Steele, maintain the Government Relations and SIRS part of the WASA website, help create and deliver the SIRS Salary Survey, distribute mail and process all WASA deposits, assist the production team with upcoming conferences, and help wherever needed.

What do you like most about your job?

The culture! I love how we all band together whenever or however. Although most of my work is remote, I still feel incredibly connected to my team. I feel valued, needed, and motivated at WASA. I love what we do, and I love knowing my job positively impacts our K-12.

How has WASA changed since you were hired?

Even though I have been at WASA for less than a year, I have seen many changes. The consistent want and need to be better for our community is exciting and motivating to me, our team, and to the WASA members.

What were you doing before being hired at WASA?

I was working at the Nisqually Red Wind Casino as a Graphic Designer. I had been at the casino for eight years when the opportunity to work for WASA came. I was nervous to leave such a great gig but also knew I wanted to do

more and feel like I was giving back in some way. I took a chance on WASA and that has been the best decision.

What do you like to do when you aren't working?

Most of my time outside of work is being with my family. Aside from family time, I take photos and have turned it into a fun hobby. I enjoy taking photos for dancers, sports, and portraits.

Best vacation you've been to?

About 10 years ago we packed all five of us, two adults and three little boys, up in my old Chevy Blazer. We spent four days exploring the 101 Loop around the Olympic Peninsula. It was amazing!

Where's your favorite place in the world?

Home. I love being home with my people. If not at home, I love being in the sun.

Reflect a bit on your professional mentor.

One person that comes to mind was my first Manager at the Red Wind Casino. Melissa and I started around the same time, and she took me under her wing. Prior to working with Melissa, I was scared of speaking in front of a group, and you wouldn't catch me doing any sort of trainings, orientations, Emceeing, or anything that involved being the center of attention. Only a year into my role my manager left the casino, and I was able to take over her role and my role at the same time. I confidently conducted all new hire orientations, conducted all company trainings, planned and emceed all recognition events, and banquets. She taught me a lot and I appreciate her leadership and willingness to teach me be the best version of myself.

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WASA OFFICERS

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PRESIDENT-ELECT

Shaun Carey, Enumclaw

PAST PRESIDENT

Mike Villarreal, Hoquiam

SECRETARY

Dana Rosenbach, North Mason

TREASURER

John Sander, Franklin Pierce



September

SEPTEMBER 17

Building Bridges in Education Lunch & Learn
12 – 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 18

Aspiring Superintendent Academy
8:30 – 11 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 19

2nd & 3rd Year Superintendent Academy
7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 25

Finding Your Voice, Part I:
Examining the WASA Legislative Platform
12 – 1 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 26

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
9 – 11 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 30

Mentor Academy
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 30

Early Career Superintendent Academy
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

October

OCTOBER 7

Working Effectively with Legal Counsel
12 – 1 p.m.

OCTOBER 8

Women In Leadership Fall Kick-Off
8:30 – 10 a.m.

OCTOBER 10

Special Education Directors Academy
8:30 – 10 a.m.

OCTOBER 11

Leading Your District's AI Integration
12 – 1 p.m.

OCTOBER 16-18

AI Summit West
DoubleTree by Hilton Seattle Airport, Seatac

OCTOBER 17-19

AI Summit East
The Davenport Grand Hotel, Spokane

OCTOBER 18

Global Instructional Leadership Network
8:30 – 10 a.m.

OCTOBER 21

Early Career Superintendent Academy
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

OCTOBER 23

Aspiring Superintendent Academy
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

OCTOBER 24

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
9 – 11 a.m.

OCTOBER 25

Finding Your Voice Part II
The Importance of Legislative Advocacy
12 – 1 p.m.

OCTOBER 28

Mentor Academy
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

OCTOBER 29

Building Bridges in Education Lunch & Learn
12 – 1 p.m.

November

NOVEMBER 3

Aspiring Superintendent Academy
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

NOVEMBER 12

Global Instructional Leadership Network
8:30 – 10 a.m.

NOVEMBER 14

Special Education Directors Academy
8:30 – 10 a.m.

NOVEMBER 15

Leading Your District's AI Integration
12 – 1 p.m.

NOVEMBER 19

Complying with the OPMA Lunch & Learn
12 – 1 p.m.

NOVEMBER 21

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
9 – 11 a.m.

NOVEMBER 21-23

WSSDA Annual Conference
Spokane, WA

NOVEMBER 22

WASA Superintendent Component Breakfast at
WSSDA
7 a.m.

NOVEMBER 23

2nd & 3rd Year Superintendents In-Person at
WSSDA
7 a.m.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Continue your professional learning and growth with conferences, academies, and workshops from WASA Professional Learning. Find more at wasa-oly.org.

