

HOTLINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



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**HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR VALUED
WASA MEMBERS!**

We're glad you're here.

HOTLINE

IN THIS ISSUE OF

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH WASA

Welcome to the first edition of the Washington Association of School Administrators' Hotline for the new year! As we embark on a journey through 2024, we are excited to bring you a diverse array of articles that encapsulate the dynamic landscape of education in Washington.

In this issue, we hear from members from across the state, along with a welcome from President Mike Villarreal and Executive Director Joel Aune.

The 2024 Legislative Session is a critical focal point in this edition, where we highlight the key legislative developments affecting education in Washington. As school administrators, staying informed about the latest policies and reforms is essential, and being an advocating voice for our students is a top priority.

We invite you to immerse yourself in the rich content of this edition, which reflects our commitment to keeping you informed, inspired, and connected. As we embrace the challenges and opportunities that the new year brings, let the *Hotline* be your guide to navigating the ever-evolving landscape of educational leadership in Washington.

Thank you to Mike Villarreal, Joel Aune, Mary Templeton, Robert Elizondo, Dan Steele, Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Krestin Bahr, Kris Hagel, Greg Baker, Megan Botulinski, Aaron Lee, Kristin Edlund, Mike Nelson, Shawna Kiliz, Natalie Plott, Ryan Hickman, Heather Chard, Kim Fry, 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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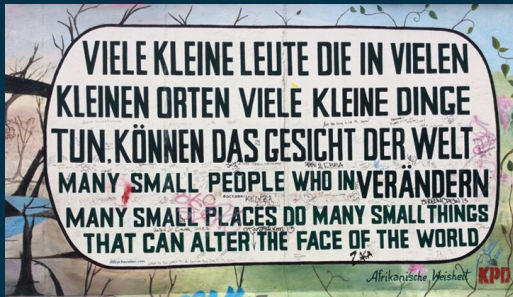
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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, it is with great enthusiasm and anticipation that I extend a warm welcome to each member of our distinguished organization. The arrival of 2024 brings with it fresh opportunities, challenges, and the promise of continued growth and excellence in Washington State.



Years ago, I was shown this image (above) of the Berlin Wall, and it immediately caught my eye and mind. As an administrator, I have reflected on what this message has meant to me and the work I embark on every day. The work of educating today's students requires EVERY professional doing their part to the best of their ability. It means daily doing the little things that ultimately change the lives of students and their educational experiences. Our work "alters the face of the world" by touching 1.1 million students through our leadership, trust, and advocacy.

As WASA members, we play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our educational institutions and, by extension, the lives of countless students.

In the pursuit of this noble mission, it is imperative that we uphold and embody the core principles that define the essence of leadership and progress. In this spirit, I urge each of you to embrace and live by the three goals that form the foundation of our organization—*Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy*, collectively known as the WASA Goals.

Leadership is not merely a title—it is a commitment to inspire and guide others toward a common vision. In the coming year, look to take advantage of the outstanding professional development that will be offered. Your professional growth and ability to 'alter' today's work is dependent on your ability to lead during these times.

Trust is the bedrock of any successful organization. With over 1300 active members, WASA stands ready to support you in the work you do. WASA has an incredible team that is motivated and eager to provide its members with the resources and supports they need to accomplish this important work. Spread the word.

Advocacy is the voice that amplifies and champions the needs of public education. In the coming year, WASA will be steadfast in advocating for quality education, equitable opportunities, and the well-being of our students. By actively engaging with stakeholders, policymakers, and the wider community, we can contribute to the positive transformation of the educational landscape.

As we embark on this new year, let the WASA Goals be our guiding principles. Let us work collaboratively, supporting one another in "altering the face of the world" by daily actions.

May the year 2024 be filled with success, growth, and fulfillment for each member of our organization. Here's to a year of meaningful impact and collective achievements. Wishing you a joyous and prosperous New Year!



Mike Villarreal is WASA President and Superintendent of Hoquiam School District.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR A Call to Action for All WASA Members



Friends and Colleagues,

The 2024 Legislative Session is underway and during the next 60 days, choices will be made by lawmakers that will impact your

work, and most importantly the students in your schools. Decisions will be made that drive resources and policy. As school district leaders, your voice during the next two months will be critically important as these decisions are made. The power of our collective voice in legislative advocacy—all 1,300 Active WASA members speaking with one voice—cannot be overstated.

Superintendents have traditionally been the voice for schools. In recent years however, WASA has encouraged all WASA Members—superintendents and non-superintendents alike—to engage in the legislative advocacy effort to fight for schools and the students you serve.

Superintendents: Leaders of this Work

We encourage you to engage in discussions with your leadership teams regarding the significance of actively participating in legislative advocacy. Take the lead and spearhead this initiative within your school district with enthusiasm. Mobilize central office administrators and principals to share their unique perspectives, experiences, and insights to tell your district's story.

WASA Members: Expand and Broaden the Voice

Your role in this important work will add strength, volume, and credibility to our advocacy effort. We encourage you to talk with your superintendents about assisting in telling your district's story, so as to influence legislators during this legislative session. Share your on-the-ground experiences and insights, ensuring that legislators are exposed to a broad spectrum of perspectives from the field. Your active participation will amplify our voice and strengthen the effectiveness of WASA's collective advocacy effort.

Effective policy and ample resources serve as fuel for your work in delivering the optimal experience for the students in your schools. Conversely, flawed policy and insufficient resources impede your efforts to serve the students under your care. These are the decisions that lawmakers will be making during the course of the 2024 Legislative Session.

Now is the time for all of us to collectively step into this effort. Thank you in advance for doubling down on your commitment to legislative advocacy by bringing a strong and compelling voice to Olympia this winter—on behalf of the students. If we are not advocating for them, then who will?

Respectfully,

G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director

WASA 2023–24 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 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 that 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 a sense of belonging, cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion to achieve excellence in public education.

Action A: Build and expand relationships with and among WASA members and other stakeholders to develop and sustain 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 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 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

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 and other policymakers to influence legislation and education policy that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion to ensure opportunities for each student to achieve successful outcomes.

Action B: In a unified and 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.

Have you read the latest WASA News?

WASA News is published monthly, providing our members with the newest information and resources for school administrators, central office leaders, principals, and superintendents. Learn more about the organization, along with helpful links and trainings that could benefit you and your district! Read this month's WASA News to learn more about:

- WASA President-elect Candidate Nominations
- WA State DOH Accepting Applications for School-Based Behavioral Health Peer Support Services Grant
- Management Reviews
- The Importance of Legislative Advocacy
- Resources for Black History Month and Martin Luther King Jr. Day

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

JANUARY 2024

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](#).

“Offense may sell tickets, but defense wins championships.” —Paul “Bear” Bryant

WASA Friends,

Next Monday the 2024 legislative session will get underway. This is a “short session”, just 60 days in length. Nevertheless, legislators will be considering matters related to funding and policy that will hold significance for schools. WASA’s [Legislative Platform](#) outlines our priorities—our stated needs that have both policy and funding implications.

In working closely with Dan Steele the past six years, I’ve learned a great deal about WASA’s efforts to influence K–12 policy for the betterment of this state’s schools and the students in them. While legislative advocacy is seen by most as pressing for what is needed, Dan reminds us that it is equally about heading off policy that would be counterproductive, or even detrimental to K–12 education.

As WASA members step up legislative advocacy efforts in the next 60 days, it is important to recognize the interplay between offense and defense in our work. The trajectory of education will be shaped by both what we secure for schools (offense), and what we fend off this session (defense).

Defensive Advocacy is how we protect public education. It involves vigilance against policies that may undermine the core principles of effective education. As champions of public education, our role in this context is to articulate the potential pitfalls and consequences of poorly conceived legislation. We must stand firmly united in these instances, ensuring that policies align with the best interests of students, educators, and the community-at-large.

On the other hand, **Offensive Advocacy** represents our proactive stance in shaping policies that drive positive change. It involves engaging policymakers so that we can advance WASA’s priorities into legislative outcomes that best serve schools. By playing good offense, we achieve changes in resource allocation and policy that improve schools and outcomes for students.

To win this legislative session, we must employ a combination of good offense and good defense. Dan Steele reminds us that short sessions typically yield budget movement of limited significance. In this context however, legislators are often inclined to focus on policy. Some of that policy will serve to advance public education, while other policy will inhibit or even be harmful to public education. In addition to executing our offensive game plan, let’s also be sure to play great defense during the upcoming legislative session.

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 Mary Templeton highlights the third pillar of WASA's Mission Statement—Advocacy.

I am always trying to find ways to simplify our message to legislators as we continue to wrestle with resource challenges that are being felt by most of us. I am also trying to grow in my understanding of the innovations needed for the future of public education in our state. When I got the request from Joel to write a piece on legislative advocacy, I decided to combine the need for simplicity and innovation—I decided to ask ChatGPT to help me summarize our financial position in language a 5th grader could understand. I gave it our F-195F budget report and it gave me a two-sentence summary—"You are spending more money than you get. If you don't stop doing that, you will be broke soon." Well, dang! ChatGPT summed it up.

In light of the financial challenges we are facing, I am thankful for the generous "down payment" for Special Education we received from our legislators last session, but the high cost of doing business in today's economy is not adequately funded. We must be able to clearly articulate why this is with our legislators and how adequate support will help us provide over one million young people an "on-ramp" to hopeful and successful futures.

Our "gaps" in funding are growing (i.e., Special Education funding, substitute costs, utility costs, insurance costs, SEBB health benefits) and we must all be prepared to share concrete examples from our district as we engage with our legislators. We must also be prepared to share the hope that we have about our work and the successes that we see. I know that in our classrooms, students are experiencing the joy of learning, the joy of being part of a

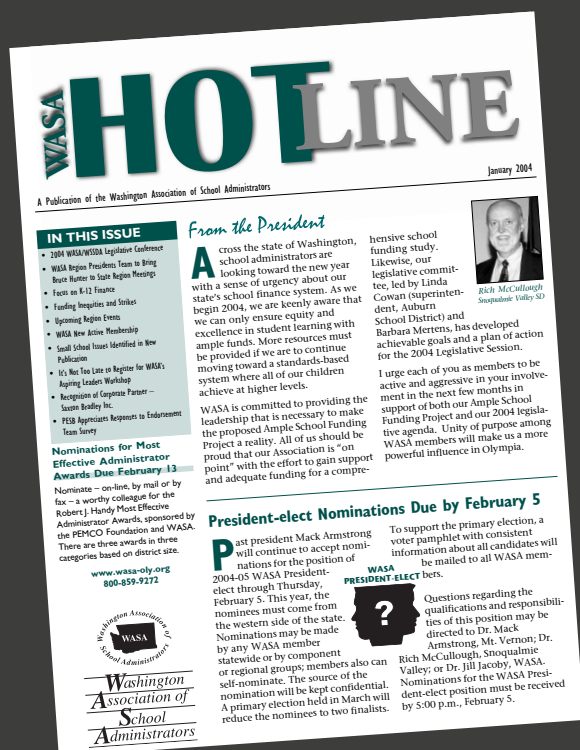
community, and the joy of intellectual/artistic creation. Girded with this hopeful stance, we must disrupt the national narrative that claims educators "haven't, didn't, and can't."

My friends, now is our time to rise up together and take back the narrative about public education and declare with confidence that, "We have, we can, and we are!"



Mary Templeton is Superintendent of Washougal School District and serves as Chair of WASA's Legislative and Finance Committee.

BLAST FROM THE PAST Hotline Twenty Years Ago



Check out the January 2004 issue of *Hotline*, which included:

- President's message from Snoqualmie Valley Superintendent Rich McCullough, urging WASA members to engage with legislators.
- Focus on K-12 Finance and the Ample School Funding Project.
- Funding Inequities and Strikes.
- Recognition of WASA Corporate Partner—Saxton Bradley Inc.

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.

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, Robert Elizondo, Touchet School District Superintendent, shares his thinking on cultural competency.

Cultural competency is one of the key components highlighted in WASA's Equity Statement. Cultural competency is integral to creating an inclusive, equitable, and effective educational environment. It contributes to the overall well-being and success of students, promotes positive social interactions, and prepares individuals to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

As an essential part of creating positive opportunities in the classroom, there is a critical need for teachers to be aware of the diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages, and experiences that students bring to their school. Recognizing and respecting this diversity is foundational to cultural competency. In my experience, multilingual learners are most successful when teachers understand language limitations yet work to make sure every student reaches their highest potential. These educators understand the importance of adapting their teaching methods to better suit the needs and learning styles of students from various cultural backgrounds.

They custom tailor their teaching strategies to address diverse needs. I would attest that student educational success is directly attributed to educators that believed in them, did whatever necessary, and made no excuses for doing so. By having a laser like focus on every student and understanding cultural competency, students outside the mainstream have a fighting chance, which helps to reduce achievement gaps among students in our state.

Approximately 40% of our K-12 students in Washington are students of color. It is critical we foster an inclusive learning environment where all students feel valued and respected. It helps create a classroom atmosphere that embraces and celebrates diversity, promoting a sense of belonging for everyone. Classrooms around our state will continue to grow with the beautiful faces of our changing demographics, thus we must push ourselves to understand how critical equitable schools are for the future of our students, state, and country.

Cultural competency enhances communication between teachers, students, and parents. Understanding cultural nuances helps educators communicate effectively, reducing misunderstandings and ensuring that information is conveyed in a way that is accessible to everyone. Communications with parents is critical as we know that when parents are involved in their child's educational experience, students tend to thrive on a much higher level.

If our goal is to strive towards cultural proficiency and provide every student a quality public education, the first step is to embrace the work around WASA's Equity Statement and its components. This will lead to acknowledging and understanding the importance of an equitable educational system that celebrates every student, family and culture.

Muchas Gracias!



Robert Elizondo is Superintendent of Touchet School District.

JANUARY REMINDERS



Connect with Us

Be sure to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), 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.

CALL TO ACTION!

2024 Legislative Session

The 2024 Legislative Session, which began on January 8, is the second year of the 68th Biennial Legislature, known as the “short” session, limited to 60 days. During this session, a major focus of legislators will be to update the two-year Operating, Capital, and Transportation budgets adopted this past session. 2024 is also an election year and legislators will feel the need to adopt legislation to boost their campaigns. This means there will be a plethora of policy issues on the table—in addition to the nearly 1,700 bills that continue from the 2023 Session. Unfortunately, many of these policy bills will include unfunded (or underfunded) mandates, especially in the K–12 arena.

Because negative education policy is presumed to be considered, WASA will likely have to play some defense to ensure untenable legislation is defeated, or at the very least, limited. Regardless, WASA will largely stay on the offensive and continue efforts to advance policy and budget issues that will benefit our school districts, students, and staff.

WASA has once again established a set of bold legislative priorities which clearly request what we believe our students and districts NEED, rather than asking for anything less than what is essential. Of course, we will be strategic and pragmatic in an effort to achieve as many “wins” as possible—but not at the expense of being honest with legislators and the public about what is needed to provide each of our students a quality education. Ultimately, it is a question about how “success” is defined. Asking for less than what is needed and achieving it is a defeat. We will ask for exactly what we need, and try to gain as much from those requests as possible, all the while laying the groundwork and building momentum for a real win later.

To have any success, regardless of how that is defined, school administrators must be engaged in the process. In recent years, more of our members have been involved, but given the high stakes, we urge you to continue your engagement—and encourage you to increase your advocacy. Part of that expansion of advocacy includes involving all school administrators—specifically, our non-superintendent members. Superintendents generally are in the lead for most, if not all, of your district’s advocacy efforts—and they should continue to be the lead in terms of direction, voice, and priorities. We strongly encourage non-superintendents, however, to join with their superintendents to enhance your district’s voice—and WASA’s impact—by getting

more involved in telling your district’s “story.”

Ultimately, it is a question about how “success” is defined. Asking for less than what is needed and achieving it is a defeat.

To support your advocacy efforts, WASA will continue to provide resources and assistance, including our [2024 Legislative Platform](#); our weekly legislative newsletter, [This Week in Olympia](#) or [TWIO](#) (published Fridays); our legislative [podcast](#) (available Monday or Tuesday each week); and our annual Session Guide (to be released in the coming weeks).

For more information on our 2024 priorities, please review the “Finding Your Voice” Lunch & Learn webinar WASA presented in September. The webinar fully unpacks the 2024 Legislative Platform, so you have a clear understanding of our legislative priorities. The webinar provides a wide-ranging review of the Platform, including background and details about the issues and strategies to move the positions forward. With this information, you can effectively inform your legislators of administrators’ collective priorities. Both the webinar [PowerPoint](#) and the [recorded presentation](#) are available for your use.

As you familiarize yourself with WASA’s Platform, it is important to note while the six issues that comprise WASA’s 2024 Legislative Platform are our highest priorities, it does not mean that we will not fight for—or oppose—other pressing matters that are not included on our short list of priorities.

It is already anticipated several “non-Platform” issues will be at play. We will fully engage in efforts to address: dramatic and unexpected increases in insurance costs; and losses in Local Effort Assistance due to spiking housing values. Additionally, we will continue to strenuously oppose: unfunded mandates; legislation to authorize prejudgment interest; and efforts to eliminate the statute of limitations for civil actions based on childhood sexual abuse—just a few actions that would be potentially damaging to school districts. While we will join with other education associations to advance many of our priorities, we continue to lead the School Funding Coalition (SFC). The SFC, comprised of eight of the state’s education management

associations, is a formalized partnership with a singular priority: advocating for updated and realistic staffing ratios in the Prototypical School Funding Model. The School Funding Coalition has adopted its [2024 Priority Document](#)—which has been disseminated to the respective association members of our Coalition, as well as legislators.

Fully aligning with one of WASA’s major priorities, the SFC will be urging the Legislature to continue the implementation of the [Staffing Enrichment Workgroup \(2019\)](#) Phase I recommendations by improving Prototypical School Funding Model support for school principals; and funding additional professional development and continuous improvement coaches. In December, the Coalition presented a Lunch & Learn webinar to ensure association members understand the 2024 priority—along with the history and background of the Prototypical School Funding Model, the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup, and legislative progress in updating the Model. The webinar PowerPoint and a recording of the presentation are available on WASA’s [Conference Resources webpage](#) (dated December 13, 2023).

Finally, we again strongly encourage all school administrators to engage in the Legislative process. Simply said, legislators need to hear “your story” and understand your needs; we simply cannot do this work without you. We want you to remember that advocacy does not have to be hard, time-consuming, or intimidating. And be assured, WASA will continue to provide you with the tools and assistance to support your efforts.



*Dan Steele is
WASA Assistant
Executive Director of
Government Relations.*

WASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



WASA Board Members during their June meeting in Spokane.

BOARD

President: Mike Villarreal, Hoquiam
President-elect: Bob Maxwell, Pullman
Past President: Michelle Whitney, Pasco
Secretary: Chrys Sweeting, Arlington
Treasurer: Linda McKay, NCESD 171

Region 101: Jake Dingman, Oakesdale
Region 105: Curt Guaglianone, Mount Adams
Region 108: Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Oak Harbor
Region 109: Chrys Sweeting, Arlington
Region 110: Shaun Carey, Enumclaw
Region 111: Laurie Dent, Sumner-Bonney Lake
Region 112: Jeff Snell, Vancouver
Region 113: Patrick Murphy, Olympia
Region 114: Dana Rosenbach, North Mason
Region 123: Jim Jacobs, North Franklin
Region 171: Tracey Edou, Cascade

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Jill Pratt, Rochester (Chair-elect)

IPAC

Linda McKay, NCESD 171 (Chair)
Denise Daniels, Fife (Chair-elect)
Jenny Rodriguez, Yakima (Past Chair)

Principals

Matt Yarkosky, Bethel (Chair)

Special Education

John Sander, Franklin Pierce (Chair)

Superintendents

Mary Templeton, Washougal (Chair)
Joey Castilleja, Mabton (Chair-elect)
James Everett, Meridian (Past Chair)

REGION PRESIDENTS

Region 101: Ben Ferney, Cheney
Region 105: Joey Castilleja, Mabton
Region 108: David Forsythe, NWESD 189
Region 109: Chrys Sweeting, Arlington
Deborah Rumbaugh, Stanwood
Region 110: To be filled.
Region 111: Kevin Alfano, Fife
Region 112: Amy Huntley, Ocean Beach
Region 113: Byron Bahr, Rainier
Region 114: Tim Winter, South Kitsap
Region 123: Thaynan Knowlton, Clarkston
Region 171: Tabatha Mires, Waterville

From Orientation to Calibration

A GUIDE TO ONBOARDING NEW SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



Onboarding a new school board member is one of the most important jobs of a school superintendent. When you add a new board member to your team, you have created a whole new school board.

This fall, several districts across the state of Washington had an unprecedented amount of open school board positions. When a new school board member steps in or is elected to the position, they come with a general idea of what they wish to accomplish as a school board member. This requires the school superintendent to take the time to get to know each new member; their background, passion, special interests, as well as what they may already know and understand about the school district.

In my short five years as a school superintendent, I have seen several board members come and go for various reasons—health, relocation, and the open election process. However, having five open school board positions at the same time was a first for me. Most school board members work full-time and volunteer to sit on the school board. Understanding how to navigate the position can be overwhelming. So too can be the copious amount of literature and information required for a new school board member to sort through.

In order to ensure a smooth transition into the role, here are a few things that I have found helpful.

After orientating several new school board members over the course of five years, I realized that I needed a better way to organize information and ensure that the information presented was a balance between informing but not overwhelming new members. While WASA (Washington Association of School Administrators), WSSDA (Washington State School Directors Association), NSBA (National School Boards Association), Policy News, and our school website had an abundance of information, trying to navigate between all these platforms could be overwhelming.

Creating a [digital handbook](#) allowed me to pick and choose the sources and information that was most critical and develop coherence across our team. This handbook not only supported my new members, but it has also been a great tool to share with all current school board members. In particular, this handbook allowed me to embed hyperlinks to our district policies that play a critical role for how our school board is governed. Because the handbook is digital, we can add, alter, or delete any section that we feel is no longer relevant to our work.

Establishing a few dates in advance of new members taking the oath of office is critically important prior to the first board meeting. I set these meetings up in advance with my school board president. The adaptive nature of the conversations at these meetings allows the superintendent to develop a relationship with the new board member. I like to hear about their journey, get to know their family, and learn about why they decided to run for school board. It also allows the new member to get to know me as a person first, superintendent second. These meetings should also include the opportunity for the new member to meet your operational and leadership team (this may include critical central office leaders and your administrative assistant). The second part of the meeting is more technical—how to access weekly board briefs, identify communication preferences, and how to access district email.

The last and most important meeting is the calibration meeting with the entire school board. This meeting should be established as a workshop within 90 days of any new board member taking office. While the goal of this meeting is to review the operating procedures as a board, including communication and guiding principles, it's equally important to set aside time for all members to share their journey as a board member and refocus their collective goals and priorities as a new school board.

Establishing a clear and coherent process for new school board orientation helps with the successful transition for any new board member. You only have one chance to make a first and lasting impression. Investing time early on for new school board member orientation, as well as the calibration with the entire school board, will ultimately lead to less confusion and a more united focus on the most important work of all, ensuring high levels of success for the staff and students in your school community.



*Michelle Kuss-Cybula
is superintendent of
Oak Harbor
School District.*

New WASA Members

We've welcomed 35 new members since September 2023.

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.

Michael Prince, Auburn
Gretchen Herringshaw, Bethel
Courtnie Rederick, Bethel
Amy M. Weaver, Bethel
Kelsey McCreary, Bremerton
Margaret Olund, Capital Region ESD 113
Wyatt Ladiges, Curlew
Libby LeCompte, Edmonds
Greg Schwab, Edmonds
Mark T. Keating, Elma
Jennifer Burrus, Fife
Keith Hannah, Fife

Noah Westerberg, Issaquah
Amy Francis, Kennewick
Timothy LaGrange, Kittitas
Michael Clark, Lake Washington
Heidi M. Paul, Lake Washington
DeAnn Hermes, Monroe
Kate Davis, Olympia
Paige Albrecht, PRIDE
David Greene, Snohomish
Jennifer B. Harlan, Snohomish
Brian Scheerer, Sumner-Bonney Lake
Amy Coats, Vancouver



Heidi Donahue, Vancouver
Lucy D. Estrada-Guzman, Vancouver
Brian Graham, Vancouver
Andre Hargunani, Vancouver
Erick W. Hoffarth, Vancouver
Kris M. Janati, Vancouver
Jacquelyn Meza, Vancouver
Erin Chaplin, Yakima
Amber Cliett, Yakima
Kirsten Fitterer, Yakima
Maria Lucero, Yakima

Incoming Superintendents

Timothy Lagrange, Kittitas
Eric Maynard, Muckleshoot

A MESSAGE FROM MIKE VILLAREAL

Invite a Colleague or Staff Member to Join WASA Today!

I'm honored to serve as President of the Washington Association of School Administrators. With over twenty years as a member, I have found WASA to be an invaluable resource to me as an educational professional. Throughout my career WASA has been a support and a professional resource in helping me grow.

At WASA we are driven by an unwavering commitment to quality education. We believe that every student deserves a transformative educational experience, and we achieve this through the pillars of Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy.

Leadership

At WASA, we empower our leaders to take charge, inspire, and guide the next generation of administrators. As a member of WASA, you will have the opportunity to lead with creativity, innovation, and a forward-thinking mindset. We believe in cultivating administrators who can drive positive change in the education landscape.

Trust

Trust is the cornerstone of any successful educational institution. WASA is dedicated to building a culture of trust among our members, partners, and the communities we serve. Join us to be part of an organization where transparency, integrity, and collaboration form the basis of our relationships.

Advocacy

WASA is not just an organization—it's a platform for advocacy. WASA is passionate about championing the cause of quality education on a global scale. As a WASA member, you will be at the forefront of advocating for policies and practices that ensure equitable access to education for all. Join us in making a meaningful impact, shaping educational policies, and contributing to a brighter future.

If someone you know is passionate about education, aspires to lead, believes in trust as a foundation, and wants to contribute to advocacy efforts that shape the future of learning—encourage and support them in becoming a WASA member.

Invite a school or school district leader to join us on our mission to elevate public education through the pillars of Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy. Take the first step and [apply now](#) to become a WASA member!



Mike Villarreal is WASA President and Superintendent of Hoquiam School District.

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.



SHAWNA KILIZ

Executive Assistant

Joining the team in 2023, Shawna has more than twenty years of experience providing administrative support to superintendents, principals, and board members within the Washington State education system.



BELLA TROIANI

Communications and Production Support

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



MIKE NELSON

Assistant Executive Director

Prior to joining the WASA staff in 2020, Mike served 35 years as a teacher, principal, curriculum and instruction director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. For the last 21 years, he has served in the Enumclaw SD where he was born and raised—with over 13 of those years as Superintendent. In 2019, he was selected as the Washington State Superintendent of the Year.



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.

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



ANDY WOLF

Assistant Executive Director

Andy, who came on board at WASA in 2016, brings more than 30 years of teaching and education leadership experience to his role with WASA. He spent the first 19 years of his career working in various roles with the Wahkiakum School District. For the last 13 years, he served as a principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent in Yelm.



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.

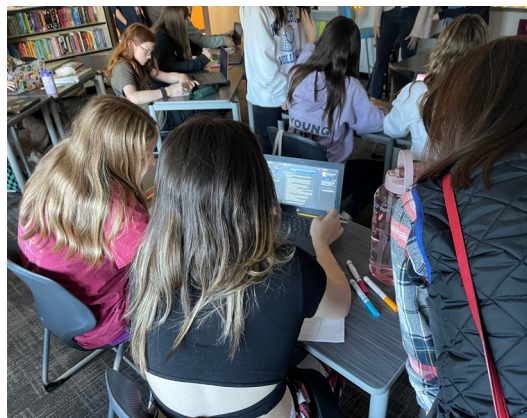
AI REFLECTIONS

Setting the Standard in Peninsula Schools: Our Leadership in AI Education Initiatives

As educational leaders in the Peninsula School District, we recognize the paramount importance of global access and technological adaptability in preparing students for an unpredictable future. We find ourselves at the forefront of AI integration, setting a pioneering standard for superintendents and school leaders nationwide.

Our commitment to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Inclusionary Practices ensures that AI is not just a tool, but a transformative force enriching the educational journey of every student. We believe there is a moral obligation to employ technology that adapts to academic needs, bridging achievement gaps and fostering an inclusive environment.

Our staff has spent the last year digging deeply into the possibilities and strategies to integrate AI into student learning and productivity. We have teachers utilizing AI to help struggling readers, simplify complex topics for students, create personalized tutoring resources, and reduce their daily workload.



Beyond the classroom, we have engaged our community, shared knowledge, and built partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and districts nationwide. These collaborations enhance our students' AI learning experiences through practical applications and hands on projects.

Central to our AI strategy is an ethical, human-centered approach. We emphasize data privacy, equity, and fairness, using AI as a tool to augment, not replace, the human element in education. This philosophy ensures that AI enhances the personal connection and wisdom vital to learning.

In Peninsula, we encourage and model collaboration for enriched AI learning experiences. For those venturing into AI integration, reach out for guidance and explore our Principles and Beliefs at psd401.net/ai. We are not just incorporating AI; we are intricately weaving it into a fabric of inclusivity, innovation, and equity. Join us in this transformative journey toward a globally adaptive and enriched educational future. We are #BetterTogether as we meet the next stage of educational advancement. Our kids deserve it!

Krestin Bahr is Superintendent of Peninsula School District.

Kris Hagel is Executive Director of Digital Learning at Peninsula School District.

THANK YOU, DIAMOND SPONSORS!

Corporate sponsorship has always been an essential element of WSA's ability to provide an exemplary professional learning and networking experience for our members at a reasonable cost. But our sponsors provide more than just resources for WASA to deliver affordable conferences, workshops, institutes, and academies. Our corporate sponsors are true partners, as they view this relationship with you as a unique and altruistic one. Thank you, sponsors!



PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

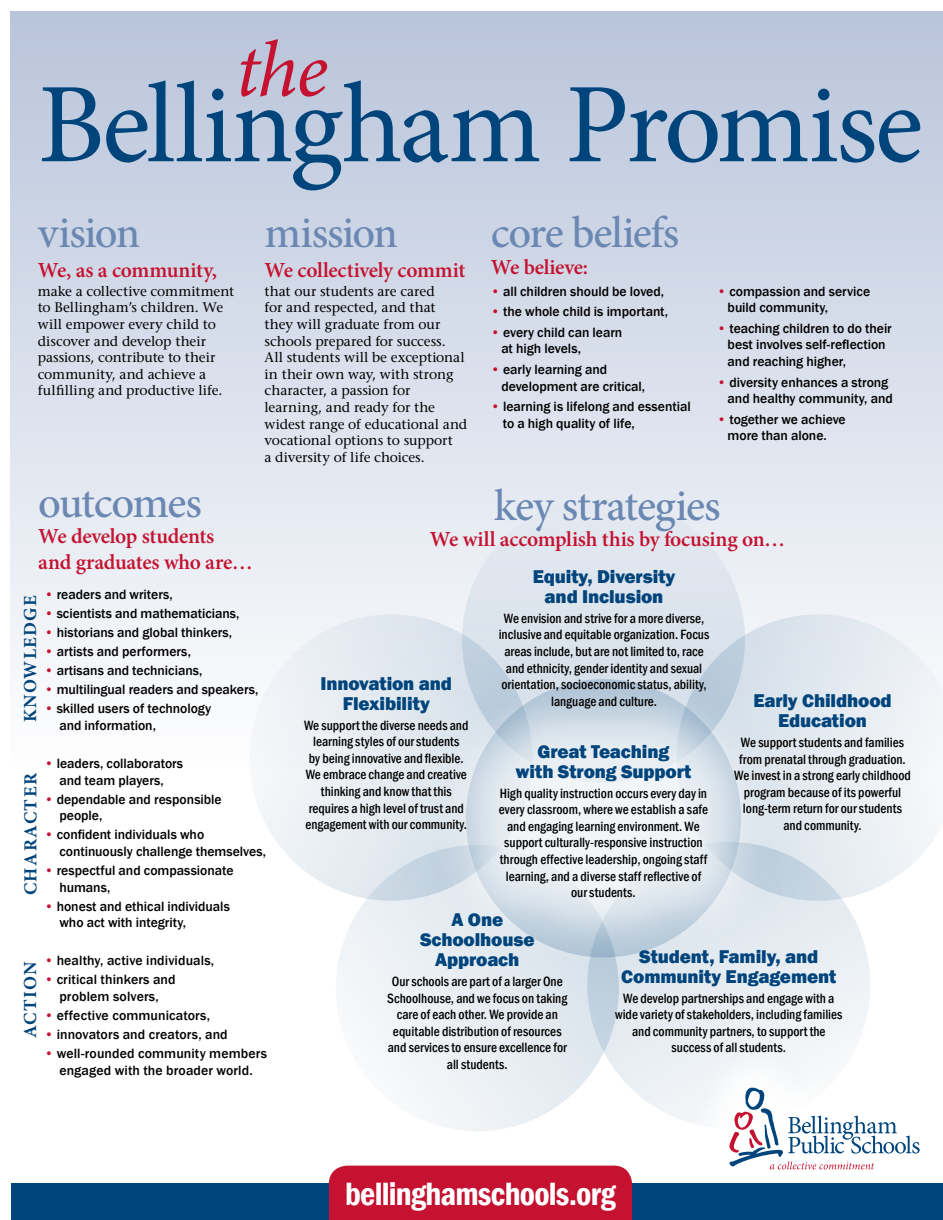
WASA places a high priority on supporting its members 24 hours a day. WASA executives are experienced, professional colleagues who are available to advise members on situations related to their roles as education leaders. Active WASA members are eligible to access the following through our Professional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

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

Questions? Please contact Andy Wolf. Andy can be reached at 360.489.3646 or by email at awolf@wasa-oly.org.

GREG BAKER REFLECTS

Supporting, Defining, and Adapting Inclusionary Practices



Bellingham Public Schools is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment that fosters the growth and development of every student. The district's strategic plan, *The Bellingham Promise*, outlines the community's expectations for its students and graduates. Our inclusionary work is part of the *Promise*—where focused work on equity, diversity, and inclusion has been underway for many years and is identified as one of our six key strategies. The district's commitment to inclusivity aligns with the Washington Association of School Administrators' (WASA) Educational Equity Statement where educational equity is embraced as the potent combination of cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Schools have led the way in the early work across our system. Sehome High School's participation with the University of Washington Haring Center as one of the Inclusionary Practices Project (IPP) demonstration sites began with a focused effort to build co-teaching partnerships, where special educators and general educators work together to co-plan and teach content courses to diverse groups of students. This includes some who are served on an individualized education plan (IEP), who otherwise may have received instruction in separate, specialized classes. Other schools have made strides in keeping all students together within their neighborhood boundaries and decreasing/minimizing reliance on out-of-neighborhood Special Education program placements.

In the early spring of 2023, we created a district-wide committee that includes representatives from administrators, teachers, and classified staff to help gather best practices occurring in schools; work on problems of practice associated with inclusionary efforts; and start to systemize what we do. The committee's work initially focused on landing a definition of "inclusion" to clarify what that term means to us here in Bellingham. The committee started from the [OSPI definition](#) and integrated our own thinking to make this definition not just specific to inclusion for students receiving Special Education services. That has helped put people on the same page about what inclusion means and the direction we are going as a system.

The committee's work continues to help clarify and plan a more focused professional learning agenda around inclusion that has been reinforced with staff learning time and school leadership teams working on professional development. We created a common template based on ideas from the [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) framework and established a set of firm goals for this year's professional learning efforts across our district. Then our schools planned around that template and framework—all related to inclusion. In October, we ran a conference-style professional learning day for all staff with over 25 "choice" courses built to foster learning related to this work. Staff built and offered courses that spoke to a wide range of levels and content areas, and then participants selected which courses they would focus on. We plan to run a second "choice course" day this spring, all connected to both the *Promise* outcomes and inclusion.

We look forward to continuing this important work across our district by learning, listening and adapting our approach as we concurrently grow and teach both our staff and students.



Greg Baker is Superintendent of Bellingham Public Schools.

MEGAN BOTULINSKI REFLECTS

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy

At the end of the 2021–22 school year, and after navigating two years of pandemic life in education, I found myself reflecting on my career, my core values, and what my next steps as an educator may be. I realized that perhaps the challenges I had faced as a leader during those years of the pandemic, actually reinforced my own commitment to lifelong learning and further clarified my core values in a way I had never realized. I was curious to understand at a deeper level exactly how each aspect of a school district could cohesively work together to cultivate an environment where every student receives equitable opportunities, every staff member is empowered, and every community member has the opportunity to be an active participant in the educational journey.

These contemplations led me to consider the possibility of a career shift to the central office, so I enrolled in the [Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy \(ACOLA\)](#) facilitated by



Ginger Callison and Dan Schlottfeldt (currently being led by Ginger and Julie Ray). This course equipped me with the insights, skills, and connections necessary to further my next steps in education. One of the most rewarding aspects was to hear from current central office leaders from around the state. Their insights were instrumental in shaping my own thoughts about the broader impact I could make, and how the various aspects of the central office can work together to serve all. Dan and Ginger also created opportunities for self-reflection, career coaching, mock interviews, and personalized resume feedback.

Additionally, the course allowed me to develop connections with fellow administrators, also enrolled in the course, navigating the same contemplations in education as I was.

ACOLA provided such meaningful and relevant information each session, offering a comprehensive understanding of central office roles. It proved to be an amazing and resourceful learning experience, equipping me with essential insights, skills, and connections for my continued journey as an educator. I would highly recommend ACOLA to any building leader aspiring to shift to or learn more about the central office.



Megan Botulinski is Principal of Snoqualmie Middle School in Snoqualmie School District.



Save the Date for the 2024 National Conference on Education

Registration for the 2024 National Conference on Education opened in July. The conference will be held February 15–17 in San Diego, CA. Visit the [AASA website](#) to view the conference schedule. Register early for the best deal and to access reserved lodging.



2024 Northwest Reception

The Northwest Reception is hosted by School Administrator Associations of Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Washington. This year's Northwest Reception conference will be held on February 16, 5–7 p.m. in San Diego, CA. Keep an eye out for an email with information regarding the reception.

FOSTERING PARTNERSHIP

WASA Welcomes WALAS as its Latest Affiliate

In its most recent meeting, the WASA Board officially granted affiliation to the Washington Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (WALAS).

Per its bylaws, WASA has the ability to affiliate with state or national professional organizations that share common interests or concerns. WASA's bylaws emphasize fostering positive relationships with such organizations to collaborate in achieving common goals. Quoting the bylaws, "It is recognized that other organizations may exist with similar purposes and goals. Positive relationships should exist between and among such organizations to aid and assist each other in achieving common goals. WASA may affiliate or ally with or accept affiliations or alliances with other state or national professional organizations which share mutual interest and/or concerns."

Washington Association of
Latino Administrators and Superintendents



Executive Director Joel Aune noted, "WASA and WALAS share common focuses and priorities, both of us emphasizing the support of school district leadership and a commitment to advancing educational equity here in Washington state. We look forward to a continuation of the partnership that has been forged with WALAS in recent years."

WALAS President Robert Elizondo expressed, "Together, we'll continue to build bridges of understanding, cultivate diverse leadership, and champion inclusive excellence, shaping a future where every student thrives and every voice is heard."

With this approval, WALAS joins as the 17th formal affiliate of WASA. A warm welcome is extended to our WALAS colleagues and friends as we formalize this new affiliation!

About SIRS



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

SIRS is a nonprofit 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

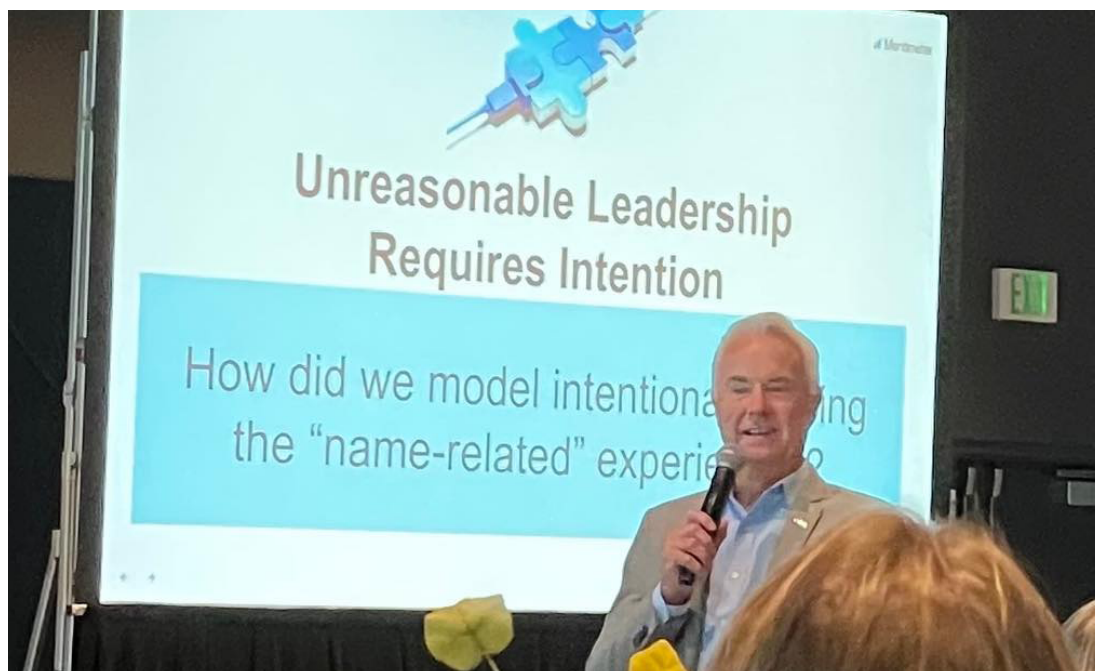
SIRS annually compiles and publishes a timely salary-and-benefits report of Washington's school employees in three parts: 1) administrators, 2) classified personnel, and 3) teachers. Only SIRS members can access the full online surveys. The Excel spreadsheets allow members to create specialized reports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

AARON LEE REFLECTS WASA'S 2023 Fall Conference



Serving in a leadership capacity requires a profound selflessness, where it is vital to dedicate your life's efforts to fostering growth, advancement, and action that prioritizes the well-being of others above all.

The Orting team's commitment to this ethos during the WASA Fall Conference, inspired by Will Guidara's notion of "Unreasonable Hospitality," provided a foundation for action-based leadership that validated and humanized our leadership learning for this weekend conference.

From the moment we arrived and were gifted our names in a picture frame, it was clear that who we are, and what we bring matters. This was particularly evident as Peter DeWitt guided our team's work focusing on our collective "Problem of Practice" and "Theory of Action" that emphasized our plan for promoting collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and wellbeing. This work was coupled with facilitation from Michael McDowell to move us in our roles as "Lead Learners" from "motion," or the planning and iteration stage, into tangible and measurable action. Particularly memorable moments from these two insightful facilitators include a push to "shrink the change" and to "have the courage to move slow."

Thanks to Peter DeWitt and Michael McDowell's facilitation, the Orting team was able to sharpen our collective coherence around equity and focus the strategic planning into action that has proven vital for our most marginalized students. The lift of leadership became much lighter during the WASA Fall Conference because our agency and dignity as lead learners was leveraged for the service of our stakeholders.



Aaron Lee is Executive Director of Equity & Student Outcomes in Orting School District.

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.



Purple Star Award APPLICATION NOW AVAILABLE

Washington state was recently approved for Purple Star designation. The Purple Star program is designed to recognize school districts that support military-connected children and families. OSPI has asked WASA to design and execute implementation of the Purple Star recognition program here in Washington.

To learn more, visit [our website](#). Applications for the 2023-24 school year are being accepted through February 16, 2024.



KRISTIN EDLUND REFLECTS

Instructional Leadership Academy



"There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you."

The opening line from Jacqueline Woodson's *The Day You Begin* rings true, but WASA's Instructional Leadership Academy ensures that Teaching and Learning teams have the opportunity to learn with others in their roles who are grappling with similar issues in unique ways.

Continuing WASA's "unreasonable hospitality," participants in this October's first Academy session were greeted by Kim Fry, Mike Nelson, Chris Beals, and Peter DeWitt with our morning drink of choice, presented in a mug with a reminder from Jacqueline Woodson: *"This is the day you begin."*

In our district, new leadership has ushered in a restructuring of roles—and goals—across the system, and particularly across our Teaching and Learning team. Rather than hesitate, we seized WASA's invitation to consider this a new beginning for our system and our team's leadership within it.

The ILA gave our team the time and tools to gain clarity in our priorities and our strategies for growing the collective efficacy of those in our system. Using the framework provided, we identified our highest priorities, the theory of action behind them, our success criteria and measurement of impact, and our action steps. The reiterative Collaborative Inquiry Cycle—*plan, implement, evaluate impact, reflect/improve*—is where PLCs, student-centered coaching, and even our state's new Student Growth Goals converge, offering a unifying practice for shifting professional work across our system.

The ILA leaders added even more value by modeling strategies and protocols to grow our own repertoires while benefiting from the wisdom of those in other systems.

Time together to focus our work this way was invaluable. The ILA leaders added even more value by modeling strategies and protocols to grow our own repertoires while benefiting from the wisdom of those in other systems. Even WASA's sponsors added value for our team by connecting us with tools that could help us reach our goals.

The Instructional Leadership Academy provides us with dedicated time and expertise to thoughtfully plan and execute the work of elevating learning for all students while empowering adults with skills and capacity.

This is the day we begin.

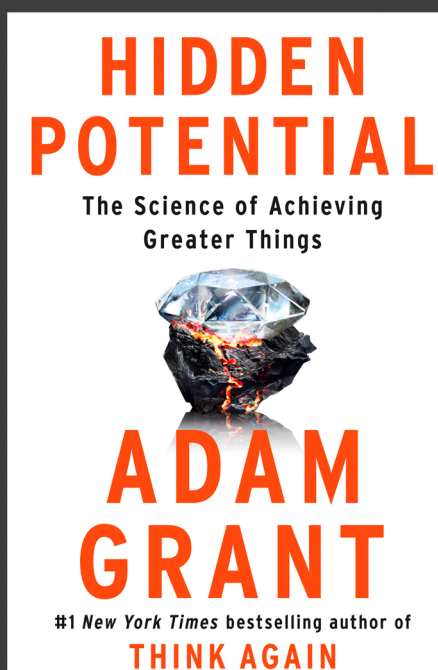


Kristin Edlund is Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning at Riverview School District.

WASA BOOK CORNER



This month, WASA Assistant Executive Director, Mike Nelson, covers the book *"Hidden Potential"* by Adam Grant.



Hidden Potential was released this fall and has become a fast friend. If you have read *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, you will find this book a wonderful companion for extending the learning from Clear's rich insights.

For the past several professional learning events at WASA, we have encouraged a two-column notetaking form to encourage learning in two ways.

Learning for Myself	Learning for my Leadership Team

Hidden Potential challenges the reader to explore their behavior and actions while also considering unlocking the potential in others. Be a sponge. Be a learner. Take action!



Mike Nelson is WASA's Assistant Executive Director of Professional Learning and Membership.

WASA Awards Timeline

It is never too early to begin thinking about applying for WASA Awards and Scholarships. Apply on our webstie or through your region. Regional WASA Honorary Awards deadlines are determined by region. Nomination forms with further information will be available to members within a few weeks.

WASA HONORARY AWARDS STATE AWARDS	
Golden Gavel Award	May 1, 2024
D.A. Davidson Barbara Mertens Legacy Award	May 1, 2024
Service to WASA	May 1, 2024
WASA Leadership Award	May 1, 2024
Learning From Leaders	May 1, 2024

WASA HONORARY AWARDS REGION AWARDS	
WASA Student Achievement Leadership Award (one award per region)	WASA Student Leadership Award
Award of Merit (one award per region)	Twenty-Year Award (self-nomination)
Community Leadership Award	Retirement Award (self-nomination)



GALLAGHER HOWARD M. COBLE SCHOLARSHIP

Dr. Howard M. Coble was a highly successful school superintendent and served as the WASA Executive Director from 1980 to 1991. Throughout Howard’s career, he served as a mentor for educational leaders across the state. In October 2016, Howard passed away at the age of 91. After his passing, the WASA Board authorized the creation of a \$5,000 scholarship in his name to assist talented, under-represented educators to pursue graduate studies that prepare them for central office leadership positions. The Howard Coble Scholarship was launched in February 2018. Our appreciation to Gallagher for their support of this scholarship. Applications will be available by a link on the [WASA website](#) from February 14, 2024 to March 27, 2024. For further information, contact [Shawna Kiliz](#) at 360.489.3641. Special thanks to Gallagher for their continued support of this award.



Introducing the WASA Learning from Leaders Award

HONORING VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

We are excited to unveil the latest addition to our lineup of [State Awards](#)—the **WASA Learning from Leaders Award!**

Starting this year, the WASA Learning from Leaders Award will be presented at WASA's Summer Conference in Spokane next June. The distinguished recipient of this award will not only be bestowed with the honor itself, but will also receive a monetary grant of \$5,000 to further advance and disseminate their innovative programs. We express our gratitude to founding sponsors, Dennis Ray, Gay Selby, and Gene Sharratt, who, in collaboration with WASA, have committed to underwriting the costs associated with this award.

consisting of a WASA member representing each region, will select the recipient based on demonstrated excellence in leadership, a commitment to innovation, and a proven track record in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Eligible nominees must be current WASA members. Both self-nominations and nominations from fellow WASA members will be accepted.

More than just an award, the WASA Learning from Leaders Award is a celebration of visionary leadership and a dedication to excellence in education. It emphasizes the importance of learning from one another through the sharing of best practices.

Information regarding the application process will be released in February. Please consider nominating or self-nominating an individual or team for this award, as we recognize and support the leaders who inspire us to learn, grow, and create a brighter future for students and educators alike.

The WASA Honorary Awards Committee,

Washington Superintendent of the Year Announced!

Dr. Laurie Dent, Superintendent of the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District, was named 2024 Superintendent of the Year on November 17, 2023 by the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA).

The announcement was made during WASA's Fall Superintendent Component meeting in Bellevue.

The award is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents and pay tribute to those who lead Washington's public schools.

"Dr. Dent is to be commended for spearheading a transformative mission during her tenure as Superintendent, turning graduation rate aspirations into concrete achievements in the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District," said WASA Executive Director Joel Aune. "The district's 100% Graduation Campaign ignited a collective commitment, resulting in an impressive 92.1% graduation rate in 2023—an 8.1% surge since 2016, including the significant closure of the graduation gap for Hispanic/Latino students."

Aune added, "Dr. Dent has advocated for and led the implementation of competency-based assessments, a focus on personalized learning, and inclusive communication in her district, effectively advancing educational equity in Sumner-Bonney Lake. Despite the immense challenges of the past three years, Dr. Dent has exhibited steadfast leadership, transparency, and adaptability."

"We congratulate Laurie and the entire Sumner-Bonney Lake school community on this well-deserved honor," said Aune.

Dent conveyed her gratitude for this acknowledgment, not just on her behalf but also on behalf of her outstanding team.

"The honor of being named Superintendent of the Year belongs to my exceptional team, the true architects of our success. Together, we have transformed schools, served our community with compassion, and led with a relentless pursuit of fulfilling our promise to know, value, and support every student. I'm proud to share this honor with a team that embodies the essence of collaborative excellence."

Dent and her team have fostered open communication, collaborative decision-making, and a shared commitment to ethical leadership.

Sumner-Bonney Lake School District has 16 schools, with 10,618 students in grades K-12, and employs 1304 certificated and classified staff.

In 2016, Dent assumed the role of Superintendent in the Sumner-Bonney Lake School District. Throughout her 26 years of dedicated service to the district, Dent has held various positions, including Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services, Chief Academic Officer, assistant principal, and co-principal at Mountain View Middle School for eight years, principal at Liberty Ridge Elementary for three years, and initially, as a sixth-grade teacher.

Dent earned her doctorate from Northwest Nazarene University in spring 2018 and her Superintendent Certification in 2016 from Washington State University. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pacific Lutheran University, a Master of Education in Special Education from Pacific Lutheran University, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix, and an Administrative Certification from the University of Washington.

In addition to her educational experience, Dent has held membership or served in several distinguished organizations, including the WASA Board of Directors, American Association of School Administrators, Washington State School Directors' Association, Washington Association of Business Officials, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Superintendent's Roundtable, National School Public Relations Association, and the National Honor Society.

Dent has received several accolades, including the 2021 WASA Award of Merit, the 2020 NSPRA Superintendents to Watch recognition, and the Distinguished Elementary Principal of the Year in the East Pierce Region in June 2013.

As the state's Superintendent of the Year, Dent will be a candidate for the 2024 American Association of School Administrators National Superintendent of the Year Award. The national award will be announced in February during the AASA National Conference on Education in San Diego, California.

In conjunction with the award, Washington's Superintendent of the Year will receive a \$1,000 check from D.A. Davidson & Company to use toward a school or educational program of their choice.



Upcoming Opportunities!



Women in Leadership
Powerful Leadership: The Role of Trust, Selfefficacy, and Feedback
 January 12 | 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.



WASA • WSSDA • WASBO
Legislative Conference
 January 28 & 29 | Virtual/SPSCC



ERNN Virtual Training:
Developing Your Bargaining Strategy
 February 6 | 9 – 10:30 a.m.

Staff Spotlight

FEATURING SHAWNA KILIZ



In this issue, we're proud to spotlight our Executive Assistant, Shawna Kiliz. Shawna joined WASA in July 2023.

Shawna has a servant's heart paired with the ability to see the whole picture and while attending to the details. Our membership and staff are all fortunate to have Shawna join the WASA family.

—Kim Fry,
WASA Assistant Executive Director,
Professional Learning & Membership

What is your role at WASA?

I am the Executive Assistant to Joel Aune, the Executive Director.

What does your job entail?

I am privileged to support Joel, the director guiding this esteemed organization. I also have the privilege of working with outstanding educational leaders statewide who serve on the WASA Board of Directors and component and committee groups.

What do you like most about your job?

I have always found joy in organizing events, and WASA organizes several events yearly. I also genuinely enjoy supporting others doing important, impactful work—education is important.

How has WASA changed since you were hired?

Well, there are a lot of new hires, me among them!

What is your favorite memory at WASA?

I enjoyed Michelle Whitney's President Celebration held last August. Michelle's speech was inspiring, and I enjoyed meeting and visiting those in attendance.

What were you doing before being hired at WASA?

Before starting at WASA, I was an assistant to superintendents in school districts for twenty-two years.

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

I enjoy cooking for my family. Lately, I have been trying lots of Mediterranean dishes. The food is healthy and delicious and has many cultural influences and flavors to experiment with.

Best vacation you've been to?

Any vacation with my family is always unforgettable, but Kauai in 2010 stands out for me. It was a trip where everything went perfectly, and it was all I could do to get back on the plane home. At one point, I even contemplated looking at job postings on the island.

Where's your favorite place in the world?

Anywhere I'm with my family. I love the beach, the mountains, and the desert. I love seeing something for the first time.

Reflect a bit on a past employee.

I feel fortunate to have worked with Sheila Chard, who served as the Government Relations Administrative Assistant until her retirement last December. Sheila had a remarkable ability to bring joy to those around her and was consistently eager to lend a helping hand. I admired her clever sense of humor and unwavering commitment to WASA and our members.

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January

JANUARY 3

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Development Providers Series #4
1 – 2:30 p.m.

JANUARY 8

Inclusionary Practices Project
District Facilitator Action Planning #4
9 – 10:30 a.m.

JANUARY 11

Inclusionary Practices Project
Team Accountability Workshopping Session #2
8:30 – 11:40 a.m.

JANUARY 11

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
Session #4 | Virtual
9 – 11 a.m.

JANUARY 11

Next Level Leaders
Virtual Meeting #4
1 p.m.

JANUARY 12

Women in Leadership
*Powerful Leadership:
The Role of Trust, Self-Efficacy, and Feedback*
Virtual
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

JANUARY 16

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Learning Seminar #3
8:30 – 10 a.m.

JANUARY 17

Aspiring Superintendents Academy
Session #5 | Virtual
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

JANUARY 28-29

Legislative Conference (Hybrid)
South Puget Sound Community College
OR Virtual
1 – 6 p.m.

JANUARY 29

Mentor Academy
Virtual Meeting #4
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

JANUARY 29

Early Career Superintendent Academy
Virtual Meeting #4
9:30–11:30 a.m.

JANUARY 30

Instructional Leadership Academy
Virtual Workshop #3
8:30 – 10 a.m.

February

FEBRUARY 6

ERNN Virtual Conference:
Developing Your Bargaining Strategy
Virtual
9 – 10:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 7

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Development Providers Series #5
1 – 2:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 9

Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
Session #5 | Virtual
9 – 11 a.m.

FEBRUARY 21

Aspiring Superintendents Academy
Session #6 | Virtual
8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 25/26

Next Level Leaders
In-Person Meeting
Cedarbrook Lodge

FEBRUARY 26

Mentor Academy
Virtual Meeting #5
8:30–10:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 26

Early Career Superintendent Academy
Virtual Meeting #5
9:30–11:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 27

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Learning Seminar #4
8:30 – 10 a.m.

FEBRUARY 27

Instructional Leadership Academy
Virtual Workshop #4
8:30 – 10 a.m.

March

MARCH 4

Inclusionary Practices Project
District Facilitator Action Planning #5
9 – 10:30 a.m.

MARCH 6

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Development Providers Series #6
1 – 2:30 p.m.

MARCH 13

Women in Leadership | Lunch and Learn
12 – 1 p.m.
Virtual

MARCH 14

Next Level Leaders
Virtual Meeting #5
10 a.m.

MARCH 14

Inclusionary Practices Project
Professional Development Providers Series #6
1 – 2:30 p.m.

MARCH 16

Instructional Leadership Academy
Statewide In-Person Spring Conference
Puget Sound Educational Service District

MARCH 18-19

Spring Conference for Small School Leaders
Wenatchee, WA
Wenatchee Convention Center

MARCH 21

Spring Conference for Small School Leaders
Wenatchee, WA
Wenatchee Convention Center

Professional Learning Opportunities

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

