

LEADING AHEAD



SIX TRENDS EVERY DISTRICT LEADER SHOULD WATCH IN 2025

In this report, Hanover outlines six key trends shaping the educational landscape in 2025—each with real implications for the work underway in our schools:

1. Academic Recovery Remains Uneven

Persistent learning gaps—especially among vulnerable student populations—continue to demand rigorous assessment of curriculum, instruction, and intervention systems. Districts are embracing instructional audits, new frameworks, and reimagined assessment strategies to address these needs.

2. Enrollment Fluctuations Drive Innovation

With enrollment patterns in flux, districts are exploring strategic partnerships, community engagement initiatives, and targeted marketing to stabilize enrollment and rebuild trust in public education.

3. Strategic Resource Use Is Essential

The expiration of ESSER funds and uncertain future funding make it imperative to align expenditures with data-driven insights. Many school systems are building capacity for program evaluation and cycle-based budgeting to ensure effective use of every dollar.

4. Student Well-being Is a Top Priority

Mental health challenges, school climate, and student engagement are front and center. Even with limited resources, districts are investing in tiered supports, climate improvement strategies, and careful consideration of cell phone policy reforms.

5. Growing Staff Leadership Capacity

To meet today's demands, teachers and staff need support in building leadership, communication, and change management skills. Differentiated professional learning, coaching, and succession planning are helping to bolster organizational capacity and culture.

6. Literacy Reform Takes Hold Nationwide

The science of reading is reshaping instructional practices across the country. Districts are focusing on foundational skills, cross-disciplinary literacy strategies, and sustained professional development to improve literacy outcomes at all levels.

The Hanover report affirms that while the work is challenging, WASA members are not alone in navigating it. Across the country, education leaders are demonstrating creativity, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. As you shape your district's goals for 2025–26 and beyond, I encourage you to use this report as a catalyst—to stretch your thinking, scan the horizon, and lead with intention.

See the Hanover Research study [here](#).

Respectfully,

G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director



Over the past few years, WASA has forged a strong partnership with our friends at Hanover Research. Their recently released 2025 Trends in K–12 Education report highlights key issues shaping the current and future landscape of public education. As we collectively navigate the post-ESSER landscape and prepare for a new wave of policy shifts and resource decisions, staying ahead of national trends is more important than ever.

As leaders of Washington's school districts, WASA members must be more than responsive—we must be forward-thinking. Our role requires us to look ahead, anticipate what's coming, and begin preparing for tomorrow's challenges today. Reports like this one help leaders to see around the corner and sharpen our focus as we prioritize, plan, and lead in rapidly evolving environments.

