

HOTLINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



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HOTLINE

IN THIS ISSUE OF

CHARTING A BOLD COURSE FOR 2025

As we step into the new year, 2025 offers a fresh chapter filled with opportunities to shape the future of education. With the recent legislative session and critical issues such as equity, funding, and student well-being at the forefront, this is a time for bold leadership and collective action. Together, we are called to amplify our advocacy efforts and champion the needs of Washington's students, educators, and communities.

In this edition of *Hotline*, we celebrate milestones, initiatives, and voices that guide us toward a brighter future. From honoring the Superintendent of the Year to recognizing Purple Star districts, we spotlight leaders making an impact.

Additionally, we're thrilled to announce open nominations for WASA's Leadership Award, Executive Director Search, and registration for our Spring Conference. You'll also find updates on programs like ERNN and SIRS, which offer critical tools and resources for navigating today's educational landscape.

As we move forward, WASA's commitment to educational equity, leadership development, and innovative solutions—like the integration of AI in education—remains steadfast. Together, let's embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead, ensuring every decision we make advances equity and excellence for all.

Thank you to Bob Maxwell, Joel Aune, Ron Banner, Mira Gobel, John Sander, Chris Woods, Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Dan Steele, Tim Garchow, Shawn Batstone, Kim Fry, Kaley VonVolkli, Dominique Wilson, Beau Wilson, Natalie Plott, 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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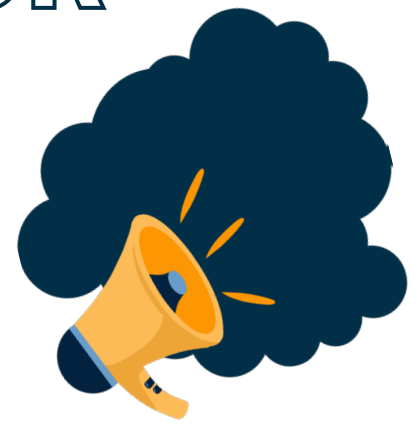
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A CALL TO ACTION FOR WASHINGTON SCHOOL LEADERS

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES WITH HOPE, INNOVATION, AND ADVOCACY



As school administrators in Washington State, we find ourselves at the crossroads of **unprecedented challenges and transformative opportunities**. With the 2025 legislative session on the horizon and significant changes looming on the federal landscape under the incoming president and majority party, the path ahead demands resilience, creativity, and a unified commitment to advocacy.

At the forefront of our challenges is the critical issue of school funding. Inflation has driven operational costs for fuel, food, electricity, and insurance premiums to historic highs, while state funding has failed to keep pace with these escalating demands. For many districts, this has resulted in difficult decisions: cutting essential programs, laying off valued staff, and stretching resources to their limits. Compounding these pressures are growing disparities among urban, suburban, and rural districts, all struggling to meet their students' diverse needs.

Yet, even in the face of these trials, hope is not lost. As leaders in education, we have the power and the responsibility to rise to this moment.

HOPE: THE FOUNDATION OF OUR WORK

Let us not forget that hope is not passive optimism; it is the belief that we can create a better future for our schools and students. In the coming months, we must ground our advocacy in the conviction that public education is the cornerstone of our democracy and the key to equitable opportunity for every child in Washington State. By focusing on the potential of our students and the resilience of our communities, we can inspire others to join us in demanding the resources and policies our schools need to help each child meet their potential.

INNOVATION: REIMAGINING EDUCATION

This moment also calls for bold innovation. While funding shortfalls create immediate challenges, they also provide an opportunity to rethink how we deliver education. How can we use technology, partnerships, and creative problem-solving to stretch resources and enhance learning experiences?

Districts across the state are already piloting solutions, from AI-driven instructional tools to community-based funding initiatives, and these efforts can serve as models for scaling innovative practices.

By focusing on the potential of our students and the resilience of our communities, we can inspire others to join us in demanding the resources and policies.

Innovation is also about adapting to potential changes in federal policies. With the incoming administration signaling possible shifts in education priorities and funding, Washington's school leaders must stay informed and proactive. By anticipating federal directives and aligning them with our state's unique needs, we can turn challenges into opportunities to strengthen our education system.

ADVOCACY: OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE

None of this can be accomplished without strong, unified advocacy. As school leaders, we must work together to ensure the voices of our students, families, and educators are heard in Olympia and at the federal level.

This legislative session, our message to lawmakers must be clear: education funding is not a luxury—it is a constitutional obligation, a paramount duty, and a moral imperative.

We must advocate for an updated funding formula that reflects the economic realities districts face today. We must demand resources to ensure that every child, regardless of their zip code, has access to high-quality education. We must emphasize that investments in education are investments in Washington's future workforce, economy, and communities.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

As we prepare for the challenges ahead, let us lean on each other for support, inspiration, and ideas. The strength of Washington's public education system lies in its people: the educators, staff, families, and leaders who show up every day with a commitment to our children's success. Together, we can turn the tide of financial uncertainty into a wave of progress and opportunity.

The road ahead will not be easy, but it is one worth traveling. Let us move forward with hope in our hearts, innovation in our approach, and advocacy in our actions. The future of Washington's children depends on it, and they deserve nothing less than our best.



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

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



REFLECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS: WASA'S VISION FOR 2025

In turning the page to 2025, we find ourselves midway through the school year—a time to reflect on highlights, assess progress, and set our sights on the future with purpose and clarity. In the second half of the school year, district leaders sharpen their focus on the goals that matter most to their students, staff, and communities. Here are some key priorities that will guide WASA's efforts in the coming months:

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Educational equity remains a cornerstone of our work, as articulated in WASA's Educational Equity Statement. In the second half of the school year, WASA will redouble our efforts to support superintendents and school district leaders in addressing systemic inequities and ensuring that all students have access to the resources, opportunities, and supports they need to thrive. Through professional development, collaborative initiatives, and targeted advocacy, we aim to empower you to drive meaningful, equity-focused change in your schools and communities.

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP NETWORKS

Connection is at the heart of effective leadership. As we move into 2025, WASA will continue to expand opportunities for members to engage in meaningful professional learning and networking. The WASA Affinity Group for Superintendents of color, a special pilot project to create a dedicated space for networking, collaboration, and mentorship for superintendents of color, is set to launch this month. Year-long academies for women in leadership, aspiring superintendents, and early-career superintendents are already underway.

After losing funding for our IPP, we have worked to secure a small amount of funding to launch the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network next month. Along with these networks, Next Level Leaders, our Special Education Director Academy, and the Global Instructional Leadership Academy serve to amplify diverse voices and foster deeper collaboration among educational leaders.

ADVANCING AI INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION

The Insight Incubator Series, Leading Your District's Artificial Intelligence Integration, has already sparked important conversations about the future of education. In the months ahead, we will continue to equip members with actionable tools and strategies to integrate AI in ways that enhance learning outcomes, improve operational efficiency, and prioritize equity and ethical practices.

This series, along with WASAbot.AI and its four custom chatbots—RCW & WAC Bot, Quality Teacher Feedback Bot, Supporting Student Behavior Bot, and Quality Principal Feedback Bot—make available to WASA members an exceptional variety and depth of resources.

AMPLIFYING ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The upcoming legislative session will be critical for addressing key issues such as equity, funding, staffing, and student well-being. WASA remains steadfast in our commitment to ensuring your voices are heard and that the needs of our schools and communities are at the forefront of policy discussions in Olympia.

Your advocacy efforts will be essential in these endeavors as we strive to sustain message discipline around the Big 3: Special Education, MSOC, and Transportation. A robust repository of resources has been developed for members to effectively mobilize their leadership teams and communities to effectively advocate for public education during the upcoming legislative session.

ELEVATING MEMBER AWARENESS OF WASA RESOURCES

In the second half of the school year, WASA will continue efforts to raise awareness of the resources and support available to members. Whether through professional development opportunities, legislative advocacy tools, or targeted initiatives, WASA stands ready to empower you in your work as a school district leader.

Members of the WASA Executive Team remain available 24/7 to answer questions, provide assistance, and help solve complex problems.

NAVIGATING LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

The search for WASA's next executive director is well underway. This transition provides a unique opportunity to reflect on our shared mission and to embrace new perspectives that will strengthen WASA's legacy of service and innovation as we look to the future.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next five months provide an opportunity for all of us to expand on the efforts and accomplishments achieved thus far. Rest assured WASA stands ready to support you in the important work of building systems and creating cultures that yield the best educational experience possible for each and every student in your care.

At its core, WASA proudly stands for leadership, trust, and advocacy—qualities WASA members exemplify every day in leading for excellence in schools across Washington state. We encourage you to reach out to us and take full advantage of the resources and support we offer in the weeks and months ahead.

It is both an honor and a privilege for WASA to partner with you in educating the 1.1 million students throughout our state. Your dedication inspires us, and we remain committed to standing alongside you in this important work.

Respectfully yours,

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 Seven Years Ago

Check out the October 2018 issue of *Hotline*, which included:

- A message from WASA President Steve Webb on WASA's legislative priorities for the 2018 session.
- Announcement of a new scholarship: the Howard M. Coble Scholarship for Under-Represented Educational Leaders.
- Local Funding Work Group Legislative Priorities for the 2018 session (WASA, WASBO, WSSDA, WSPA, AEA, AWSP).
- WASA's Executive Director posting as the Board searched for Bill Kiem's replacement.
- Information about WASA's Winter Conference on Legal Issues and the 2018 Legislative Conference and Day on the Hill.

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

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 Ron Banner highlights the first pillar of WASA's Mission Statement—LEADERSHIP.

As school superintendents, our core mission aligns seamlessly with WASA's first pillar: Leadership in providing equity and excellence in student learning. This principle is more than a guiding statement; it is the foundation upon which we build systems that empower students to reach their fullest potential.

Leadership in education begins with fostering a shared vision. As superintendents, we have the responsibility to create environments where every student, regardless of their background, has equitable access to high-quality learning experiences. This means addressing disparities, championing inclusivity, and holding ourselves accountable for outcomes that reflect excellence for all.

True leadership also requires cultivating a culture of trust. We earn trust through transparent decision-making, ethical leadership, and the courage to tackle complex challenges. By exemplifying competence and integrity, we inspire our teams to join us in the relentless and unapologetic pursuit of student success.

Additionally, leadership in education extends beyond the walls of our schools. WASA's commitment to advocacy reminds us of the critical role we play in shaping policies that prioritize student needs. By building partnerships with legislators, families, and community stakeholders, we ensure that the resources and support systems necessary for equity and excellence are firmly in place.

As superintendents, our work is not just about managing schools, it is about leading transformative change. Through support from WASA, we are empowered to be visionary leaders who inspire trust and drive advocacy, ensuring that every child in Washington experiences the promise of a world-class education.



Ron Banner is Superintendent of the Clover Park School District and the 2025 Washington State Superintendent of the Year.

New WASA Members

We've welcomed 33 new members since September 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.

Whitney Skarbek, Bainbridge
Aaron Miller, Bellevue
Elizabeth Smith, Bethel
Leslie Wohld, Chehalis
Sheila Ammons, Clover Park
Haley Brown, Clover Park
Rebecca Ho, Clover Park
Karen Schreiber, Clover Park
Tyler Borden, Dieringer
David Cordell, Dieringer
David Uberti, Dieringer

Michelle Brenner, Spokane — East Valley
Nikole Lyle, ESD 123
Betty Palmer, Grandview
David Burgess, Marysville
Kelly Stickel, Mill A
Jennifer Tenney, Mount Adams
Trisha Schock, NCESD 171
Michelle Dower, OESD 114
Jayne Croff, Peninsula
Allison Shepard, Peninsula
Julie Shultz-Bartlett, Peninsula

Justin Lanting, PSESD 121
Samantha Griggs, Riverside
Chhoun Mey, Shoreline
Treena Sterk, Shoreline
Christine Del Pozo, Stanwood-Camano
Ruth Floyd, Stanwood-Camano
Robert Hascall, Stanwood-Camano
Jeff Jorgensen, Stanwood-Camano
Misty Hinkle, Tumwater
Andra Kelley-Batstone, Tumwater
Sara Tackett, Vancouver



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 April 2022, 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, Mira Gobel, Pasco School District Assistant Superintendent, shares her thinking on cultural competency...

Culturally Competent Leadership STARTS WITH "MIRROR WORK"

As I prepared this essay, I began and restarted multiple times. After a few inhales and exhailes, I decided to write from a place of authenticity and vulnerability. I am keenly aware that my audience includes accomplished thought leaders, cultural competency experts, and transformative educators. Yet, the central question remains: *as educational leaders, how do we ensure that **cultural competency** is not relegated to educational jargon but transformed into meaningful action?*

When someone risks making a mistake by speaking up, it opens the door for dialogue—a bridge to understanding.

In a recent book study with a group of principals, we grappled with the foundational components of collective efficacy. One principal courageously asked, "Why do we often avoid discussing cultural competence, even though it is essential for fostering professional learning communities?" The responses were telling; fears of saying the wrong thing, offending someone, or feeling ill-equipped to contribute were common sentiments.

As a person of color, I understand that silence is often born from good intentions, but I also know that silence can be deafening. When someone risks making a mistake by speaking up, it opens the door for dialogue—a bridge to understanding that allows us to engage with our shared humanity. Conversely, when silence

prevails, we are left to construct our narratives in isolation, perpetuating misunderstandings and missed growth opportunities.

Shawn Ginwright, in *The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves*, challenges us to consider cultural competence as a pivot toward healing. He articulates four transformative shifts: **Awareness**—from lens to mirror; **Correction**—from transactional to transformative relationships; **Vision**—from problem fixing to possibility creating; and **Presence**—from hustle to flow (Ginwright, S., 2022). These pivots underpin the idea that cultural competence is not a fixed destination but an ongoing, intentional, and personal journey.

Cultural competence is less about expanding knowledge and more about strengthening a muscle—one that requires consistent exercise. Like physical fitness, it demands daily effort, not just reading about best practices or engaging in intellectual discourse. Ginwright reminds us, "When we pivot from lens to mirror, we gain the ability to move forward in our lives with confidence of sight." This "mirror work" begins with a daily commitment to self-reflection: which cultural competency muscle will I exercise today?

The journey of cultural competence cannot be undertaken alone. Ginwright suggests forming a "mirror group," a collective of individuals committed to similar growth. These groups challenge, help us identify blind spots, and inspire us to expand our perspectives, enabling us to lead authentically and courageously.

TURNING REFLECTION INTO ACTION

Culturally competent leadership is paramount for educational equity and excellence. It requires us to lead with intentionality, humility, and a willingness to lean into discomfort and stay in it. Engaging in "mirror work" deepens our self-awareness and models the vulnerability and courage necessary to foster transformative change in our schools and communities.

We are uniquely positioned as district leaders to set the tone for our districts. Our actions, words, and commitments signal to every educator, student, family, and community that cultural competence is not optional but vital. Let us not only talk about cultural competence but embody it, ensuring that every policy, program, and decision reflects our relentless pursuit of educational equity. I challenge us to be the courageous voices that turn reflection into action and inspire the next generation of leaders to do the same.

References

Ginwright, S. (2022). *The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves*. North Atlantic Books.



Mira Gobel, Pasco School District Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Emotional Learning, serves on the WASA Board of Directors.

Broadening WASA's Voice

ALL ADMINISTRATORS MUST JOIN THE ADVOCACY EFFORT

As educational leaders, our collective voice has the power to influence policy and secure the resources needed to support all students. While superintendents often lead the charge in legislative advocacy, it is essential for all administrators, regardless of title or role, to engage in this critical work.

The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) has prioritized three key legislative issues: Transportation, Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Special Education funding. These priorities are fundamental to creating an equitable education system, but the need for increased Special Education funding is especially urgent. Chronic and persistent underfunding of Special Education continues to strain district budgets, forcing decisions that compromise the services students with disabilities depend on. Fully

funding Special Education is not just an equity issue—it is a moral and legal obligation.

Fully funding Special Education is not just an equity issue—it is a moral and legal obligation.

Advocacy cannot rest on the shoulders of superintendents alone. Every administrator, whether focused on teaching and learning, finance, operations, or Special Education, has a stake in these issues. Your expertise and firsthand understanding of how funding shortfalls affect students, staff members, and schools bring invaluable credibility and weight to our collective message and advocacy efforts.

I urge you to engage with legislators, share your stories, and amplify the voices of your students and communities. Together, we can make a compelling case for sustainable investments in public education, ensuring that every child has access to the resources they need to thrive. Now is the time for us to advocate and act with urgency and solidarity—our students deserve nothing less.



John Sander, Franklin Pierce School District Assistant Superintendent, is the Special Education Component Representative on the WASA Board of Directors.

The Search for WASA's Next Executive Director is Underway!

TIMELINE

Selection of Candidates for Interviews:

March 3–4, 2025

Preliminary Interviews:

March 12–15, 2025

Final Interviews:

March 20–22, 2025

Selection of New Exec Dir:

March 26, 2025

Search for Executive Director

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 23, 2025



www.wasa-oly.org/ExecDir2024

Last September, Executive Director Joel Aune announced his plans to retire from WASA, effective June 30, 2025.

Partnering with Northwest Leadership Associates, the WASA Board is currently

conducting a search for the next Executive Director. The official announcement of the opening was issued last fall.

To learn more about this unique leadership opportunity, including the application process,

[click here](#). For questions about the position, reach out to Dennis Ray at dennisray@mac.com, Tom Rockefeller at Trockefeller@superintendentsearch.com, or Joel Aune at jaune@wasa-oly.org.

Join Next Level Leaders Cohort Two!

NEXT LEVEL LEADERS

WASHINGTON STATE'S PREMIER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR COHORT TWO

STARTING SUMMER 2025

AWSP WASA

We invite you to join Next Level Leaders Cohort Two, starting Summer 2025. This is an exciting opportunity to be a part of Washington State's Premier Leadership Development Academy.

The Next Level Leaders Academy (NLL) is dedicated to enhancing student achievement by engaging school and district administrators in transformative leadership practices and fostering effective teams to address complex educational challenges.

Apply now at nll.academy.

Legislative Update: Call to Action

On January 13, legislators convened the 2025 Legislative Session, the first year of the 69th Biennial Legislature. During this “long” session—limited to 105 days—a major priority will be to adopt new two-year Operating, Capital, and Transportation Budgets. Never a simple task, drafting and adopting the 2025–27 Operating Budget will be even more difficult, as budget-writers will be grappling with a projected budget shortfall, potentially as high as \$12 billion. (To provide context, understand the current 2023–25 Operating Budget appropriates \$71.95 billion.) There is a heavy debate regarding the actual size of the shortfall; however, it is clear that there will be significant conversations about cuts to current programs, and limitations on adopting new programs or increasing current programs. Additionally, there is expected to be ongoing conversations about a revenue package—that is, “taxes.”

In the midst of the budget shortfall, WASA will be aggressively advocating for [our 2025 Legislative Platform](#)—which urges the Legislature to amply fund Special Education, Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC) and Pupil Transportation. Securing the necessary appropriations (potentially \$1.5 billion) to “fully fund” these programs will certainly be an uphill battle.

In any session, asking for billions of dollars is a tricky proposition; asking for those significant investments in the face of a potentially massive state budget shortfall will be even more difficult. Given that the Legislature has not been providing the necessary resources to keep up with schools’ increasing needs and increasing costs, however, what we are asking for is not a “want to have,” but a “need to have.” And it is high time legislators positively respond. Adding to our argument, ample funding of Special Education, MSOC, and Pupil Transportation is not an optional decision—they are basic education programs which the Legislature is constitutionally obligated to fully support.

What has always been clear is that school administrators, on the ground, building relationships with legislators and engaging in the legislative process is the necessary ingredient to push us over the top.

With the session underway, we are building on the momentum we have gathered in the last nine months since our Platform was adopted.

What has always been clear—and continues to be clear—is that school administrators, on the ground, building relationships with legislators and engaging in the legislative process is the necessary ingredient to push us over the top. We call on all school administrators to consistently engage in the process and “tell your stories.” We know that some administrators may be new to the advocacy game—or may be uncomfortable engaging. WASA stands ready to assist you in your advocacy efforts.

First, if you were unable to participate in our “Finding Your Voice” advocacy Lunch & Learn series, each of the webinars (WASA Platform Review; Advocacy Training; 2025 Session Preview) have been recorded and the PowerPoint presentations are also available for your use on the WASA website, under [Professional Learning Event Resources](#). We also continue to update our [Advocacy Toolkit](#), which houses talking points, videos, social media content, and other communication resources—to assist and align our members as you engage with your own legislators. One key resource we recently added are [sample templates](#) to help you display funding shortfalls (state funding vs district expenditures) of Special Education, MSOC, and Pupil Transportation in a common form. Our effort is to ensure WASA—and our partners—not only regularly engage, but also speak with one voice as much as possible. We encourage you to use the resources in the Tool Kit to advocate for WASA’s 2025 Platform.

In terms of our partners, it is important to remember school administrators in WASA are not moving down this road alone. Eight other education associations have followed our lead and have included the “Big Three” on their legislative platforms. They, too, are using the Toolkit as we join together and speak with one voice. Right out of the gate, we joined forces with the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD), which has been assisting us with communications, including the development of the Toolkit (and our school funding website: www.waschoolfunding.org). Our other partners are: Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA), Washington Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), Alliance of Educational Associations (AEA)—which represents two associations: Washington Association of Maintenance and Operations Administrators (WAMOA) and Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA)—Washington Association of Career and Technical Administrators (WACTA), and

Washington State Parent Teacher Association (WSPTA).

In addition to these specific resources developed to assist with the advancement of WASA’s 2025 Legislative Platform, we will continue to produce our weekly legislative newsletter (*This Week in Olympia*, or *TWIO*) and our weekly [Legislative Report Podcast](#). These two resources will keep you up-to-date with action in the Capitol. WASA members automatically receive TWIO, every Friday in your e-mail inbox (let us know if you are not receiving). Our legislative podcast is produced and available every Monday or Tuesday. We encourage you to subscribe using your preferred podcast site (Apple Podcasts, Spotify, etc.) and you will be notified when a new podcast is posted. While both resources will assist your efforts, we encourage you to use the podcast to supplement the newsletter, rather than replace the newsletter.

The 2025 Legislative Session could be pivotal in providing needed supports to school districts across the state that are struggling financially. As noted above, achieving success will be an uphill battle. If we fight together, we may not get everything we need; however,



if you sit on your hands and watch from the sidelines, losing is almost guaranteed. Remember what the great Wayne Gretzky said, “You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

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.

BOARD

President: Bob Maxwell, Pullman

President-elect: Shaun Carey, Enumclaw

Past President: Mike Villareall, Hoquiam

Secretary: Dana Rosenbach, North Mason

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Region 105: Ellen Perconti, Goldendale

Region 108: Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Oak Harbor

Region 109: Chrys Sweeting, Arlington

Region 110: Israel Vela, Kent

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 Fry, College Place

Region 171: Becky Berg, Eastmont

COMPONENTS

BPAC

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Chris Gardea, Walla Walla (Chair-elect)

IPAC

Mira Gobel, Pasco (Chair)

Amanda Kraft, Puyallup (Chair-elect)

Linda McKay, NCESD 171 (Past Chair)

Principals

Elyse Mengarelli, Mabton (Chair)

Special Education

John Sander, Franklin Pierce (Chair)

Superintendents

Robert Elizondo, Touchet (Chair-elect)

Mary Templeton, Washougal (Past Chair)

WASA Welcomes Marissa Rathbone as New Assistant Executive Director for Government Relations

We are excited to announce the selection of Marissa Rathbone as WASA's next Assistant Executive Director for Government Relations.

Marissa will officially join the WASA leadership team on July 1, 2025, succeeding Dan Steele, who is set to retire on June 30, 2025.

Marissa brings over twenty years of experience in education, including roles as a classroom teacher, program manager, and program supervisor and director at OSPI. Most recently, as the Director of Strategic Advocacy at WSSDA, she demonstrated an exceptional ability to navigate complex policy landscapes, advocate effectively for K-12 priorities, and foster strong relationships with legislators and education leaders statewide.

Her extensive knowledge of the legislative process, paired with a deep commitment to public education, positions her perfectly to build upon Dan Steele's legacy of exemplary legislative expertise, credibility, and leadership. Marissa's passion for advocating for students, educators, and school systems aligns seamlessly with WASA's mission and goals.

As we welcome Marissa to the team, we also extend our deepest gratitude to Dan Steele for his dedication and contributions to WASA, the WASA membership, and the K-12 community over the course of his remarkable career.

Please join us in celebrating Marissa Rathbone's appointment and her forthcoming work to support WASA's members and the broader educational community.

Welcome to WASA, Marissa!



REGION PRESIDENTS

Region 101: Ken Russell, Riverside

Region 105: Lisa Gredvig, Union Gap

Region 108: James Everett, Meridian

Region 109: Dan Chaplik, Sultan

Region 110: Susana Reyes, Shoreline

Region 111: Ed Hatzenbeler, Orting

Region 112: Denny Waters, Battle Ground

Region 113: Lisa Grant, Centralia

Region 114: Erin Prince, Central Kitsap

Region 123: Pete Peterson, Kiona-Benton City

Region 171: Nik Bergman, Quincy

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. Prior to joining WASA, she worked as a Resource Paraprofessional for six years in the Olympia School District.

Saluting Excellence

APPLY FOR WASHINGTON STATE'S PURPLE STAR AWARD

We are excited to announce that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in partnership with the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) is once again opening applications for the 2025 Purple Star Award. This prestigious award recognizes school districts that have shown a steadfast commitment to supporting military families, providing essential resources and comprehensive support to military-connected students.

The Washington State Purple Star Award is granted every two years to districts that meet specific criteria. This award highlights the extraordinary efforts of districts that create welcoming and supportive environments for military families, fostering educational success and emotional well-being.

APPLICATION PERIOD

The application period for the Purple Star Award is **now open through February 2025**. We encourage all qualifying districts to apply and showcase their dedication to serving military-connected students. Districts can apply every two years to be considered for this honor.

LEARN MORE

For more information about supporting military-connected students and to access the application details, [click here](#).

We look forward to recognizing the outstanding efforts of our school districts in supporting military families through the Purple Star Award. Your dedication ensures that every military-connected student can thrive academically and emotionally, despite the challenges of frequent relocations.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



Supporting Military-Connected Students with Dedication and Innovation

YELM COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Yelm Community Schools (YCS) proudly supports its military-connected families, recognizing the unique challenges they face, such as frequent relocations, parental deployments, and social adjustments. The district is dedicated to fostering an environment where these students can thrive both academically and emotionally.

For over a decade, YCS has partnered with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) to provide innovative support for military-connected students. By using data analysis, the district identifies academic and social-emotional gaps, addressing them through targeted initiatives such as literacy and math

programs, social-emotional learning (SEL), and inclusive practices that create welcoming environments. With DoDEA funding, YCS offers professional development for educators, cutting-edge technology, and evidence-based interventions that empower students to succeed.

In February 2024, YCS hosted the DoDEA Regional Community of Practice event, showcasing its efforts to support military-connected students. The event featured classroom visits and a student panel where military-connected students shared their experiences. The students' impactful discussions led to an invitation to speak at the Military Child Education Coalition Summit in Washington, D.C., in July.

"Accompanying our students to Washington, D.C., and moderating the panel was a humbling experience," said Lori Gray, YCS PK-12 Literacy Instructional Coach and a military-connected spouse and parent. "Hearing them speak so candidly about their resilience and courage was inspiring."

In 2024, YCS earned the prestigious Purple Star designation, recognizing its exemplary support for military families. "Military families bring incredible strength to our community," said Kendall McNutt, YCS Director of Student Learning. "We are committed to honoring their sacrifices by ensuring their children receive the best education and support possible."

Through its partnership with DoDEA and commitment to inclusivity, YCS continues to set a national standard for excellence in serving military-connected families, reaffirming its mission to empower all students.



Chris Woods is
Superintendent of Yelm
Community Schools.

Hearing [our students] speak so candidly about their resilience and courage was inspiring.

Oak Harbor Public Schools

SUPPORTING MILITARY FAMILIES WITH UNIFIED UNDERSTANDING

At Oak Harbor Public Schools (OHPS), supporting military-connected students and families is a shared responsibility embraced by every member of our team. This dedication, recently recognized with the prestigious Purple Star Award, reflects our commitment to creating a community where military families feel respected, valued, and supported.

What sets OHPS apart is the unified understanding of military families' unique needs across all roles in the district. From bus drivers and coaches to teachers and front office staff, everyone contributes to ensuring military students have the resources and relationships they need to thrive. "Creating a space for connections brings validation to our students and their families," said mental health counselor Joycelin Vester. "When we acknowledge their experiences and provide a safe place to share, we're helping them feel seen and valued."

Military students are global citizens, moving every two to three years and navigating challenges that require resilience and support. OHPS provides wraparound services tailored to their needs, including peer-to-peer outreach programs, mental health counselors, and Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC). "These services foster connections, guide students through transitions, and create safe spaces for them to grow," shared MFLC Codi Nuzzo.

From elementary peer-to-peer support groups to high school peer-led initiatives, OHPS empowers students to prepare for deployments, welcome new classmates, and address the unique challenges of military life. These efforts strengthen the entire district and exemplify what schools can do to support military-connected families.

During the Month of the Military Child, OHPS celebrates the resilience of military students

and encourages all schools to join in recognizing their contributions. Even schools without a direct military connection can foster unity by acknowledging students and staff impacted by military service.

At OHPS, honoring military families is more than a mission—it's a collective commitment. Together, as #ONEOAKHARBOR, we build trust, foster connections, and create a community where military students feel they belong. This work highlights the power of unity and serves as a model for schools everywhere.



Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Superintendent of the Oak Harbor School District, is a WASA Board member.

Register Now for Spring Conference!

This year's Spring Conference in Wenatchee, WA is designed to empower small school leaders with actionable tools and strategies to overcome challenges and drive success. Engage in sessions on leadership communication to inspire trust and unity, crisis communication to maintain transparency, and building collaborative networks for shared solutions. Explore topics like using data for improvement, strategic planning with AI, budget-building tools, and securing grants and funding. Join us for this opportunity to connect, learn, and lead with impact. Learn more and register today at www.wasa-oly.org/Spring25.



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:

- Black History Month Resources
- Upcoming Events
- Membership Survey Coming Soon
- Apply Now for Next Level Leaders Cohort 2
- Applications Open for Purple Star Awards

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



Shine a Light on Visionary Leadership



NOMINATE AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE 2025 WASA LEARNING FROM LEADERS AWARD

The application period for the second-ever **WASA Learning from Leaders Award** opens on **February 17**. This prestigious honor, introduced last year, celebrates exceptional leadership within the WASA community by spotlighting an individual or team who has implemented exemplary programs that significantly impact student learning, engagement, safety, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In addition to recognizing excellence in leadership, the WASA Learning from Leaders Award emphasizes the importance of learning from one another through the sharing of best practices.

Last year, the inaugural Learning from Leaders Award was presented to Ron Banner, Superintendent of Clover Park School District. Ron and his team's innovative leadership and commitment to advancing equity and inclusion

were celebrated during the 2024 WASA Summer Conference. You can revisit this inspiring story and learn more about these impactful programs in Ron's September 2024 *Hotline* feature [HERE](#).

The 2025 recipient will again be honored at the WASA Summer Conference in Spokane, receiving a \$5,000 grant to highlight and further their groundbreaking work. This award is made possible through the generous support of our founding sponsors, Dennis Ray, Gay Selby, and Gene Sharratt.

Stay tuned for details on the nomination process, **set to open February 17**. You can find out more about our honorary awards [here](#). Let's continue to celebrate and learn from the visionary leaders among us as we work together to create brighter futures for students and educators alike!

Learn about ERNN



The Employee Relations and Negotiations Network (ERNN) was created to better organize and communicate information between school district administrators and ESDs. Membership in our statewide network provides regular updates on emerging bargaining and employee relations issues, greatly enhancing your district's perspective in negotiations.

ERNN membership is district-based, not individual-based. Membership includes all administrators within a district. Access to the Members-Only section of our website is provided to any administrator designated by their superintendent.

Membership costs are based on student FTE, with most districts paying less than \$500 per year.

ERNN Member District Services Include:

- Regional Representative and Member District Networking
- Access to Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) from Across the State
- Bargaining and Negotiations Training and Workshops
- Fall Virtual Trainings
- Spring In-Person Trainings
- ERNN Online Resource Center
- Archived Presentations and Resources from Past Trainings
- Bargaining Bulletins and Alerts

NEW THIS YEAR: We are in the process of updating the members-only website to ensure members can quickly and efficiently access the resources they need.

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 253.831.5968. Let's work together to empower our bargaining teams with the information and resources they need.

AI Incubator

A THOUGHT PARTNER
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS



Ever feel isolated or hesitant to reach out to a peer for support? While nothing replaces the emotional and intellectual benefits of

problem-solving with a trusted colleague, busy schedules don't always align when we need input the most. That's where AI can step in as the next best thing to an immediate thought partner.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to download the **ChatGPT** app by OpenAI on your phone. Be sure to install the official app. Once set up, use the "headset icon" to speak directly to the AI. Here are two practical ways to make it work for you:

1. Generate Insights and Explore Options

Describe your situation and ask ChatGPT to:

- Suggest possible next steps you could take.
- Pose questions to help further define the issue or refine your plan.
- Identify the pros and cons of different approaches.
- Highlight potential perspectives of other stakeholders or impacted groups.

2. Prepare for Challenging Conversations

Use ChatGPT as a role-play partner to practice navigating difficult discussions.

Here's how:

- Tell ChatGPT to play the role of a [your title, e.g., school principal, superintendent].
- Explain that you'll play the role of [the other party, e.g., parent advisory group, union president, concerned parent].
- State the goals of the meeting, such as:
 - What you aim to accomplish.
 - How you want the other participants to feel by the end of the conversation.
- Begin the conversation and interact as you would in real life.
- Once you've worked through the dialogue, switch roles to gain additional insight.

Tip: If you pause too long before responding during a role-play, ChatGPT may continue speaking before you're ready. Simply tell it you weren't finished and ask for more time to respond.

Bonus Insight: Keep a Record

Did you know that all verbal chats are automatically saved in your account's chat history? This can be a valuable reference for reviewing conversations and ideas later.

Mentorship

THE KEY TO EMPOWERING WOMEN LEADERS

As I browsed the aisles of a local bookstore, lost in thought, a nearby conversation caught my attention. Two men were debating women in leadership. One man scoffed at the idea, but another countered: "My wife has run our household for 40 years, and I bet your wife runs yours too. It's about time we brought that sense and order to the Oval Office."

I smiled as a man in his sixties walked out. His words weren't just a defense of Kamala Harris; they were a powerful reminder of the leadership women demonstrate every day, the systemic barriers they continue to face, and the relentless pressure to adapt to male-dominated norms.

This moment echoed the findings of my 2023 dissertation, *The Impact of Mentorship on Attracting and Sustaining Female Superintendents in Washington State*. My research found that mentorship isn't just career guidance; it's a transformative tool that helps women thrive despite the odds.

WHY MENTORSHIP MATTERS

For the women superintendents I interviewed, mentorship unlocked possibilities. One

explained, "Mentorship created pathways for me to see myself in leadership. It gave me the confidence to step into spaces where I often felt underrepresented." Mentors advocate, guide, and provide insight into navigating complex challenges.

Mentors are lifelines, providing support in moments of doubt or crisis. As one participant noted, "Without my mentor, I wouldn't have weathered the challenges of my first year." Mentors help women lead authentically, challenging stereotypes and inspiring others to believe in their potential.

THE ROLE OF MEN

Men play a critical role in championing women leaders. By mentoring, sponsoring, and advocating, men can dismantle barriers, promote inclusivity, and create environments where diverse leadership thrives. Supporting women leaders isn't just about equity, it strengthens organizations and inspires future generations.

A CALL TO ACTION

The bookstore conversation reminded me of the work still needed.

To create lasting change, we must:

- Establish mentorship programs for aspiring women leaders.
- Prioritize representation by promoting women to visible leadership roles.
- Invest in leadership training tailored to challenges like bias and code-switching.
- Foster inclusive cultures that value diverse leadership styles.

Mentorship is about more than career advancement—it's about empowering women and other underrepresented groups to lead authentically. Together, we can create a future where diverse leadership is the rule, not the exception. The next generation is watching. Let's show them what's possible



Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Superintendent of the Oak Harbor School District, is a WASA Board member.

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!



State Superintendent of the Year[®] (SOY)



Congratulations to Dr. Ron Banner of Clover Park School District for being named Superintendent of the Year 2025! Weaving equity into all aspects of educational practices is a top priority Clover Park School District Superintendent.

The announcement was made last month during WASA's Fall Superintendent Component meeting in Spokane. The annual award is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents and pay tribute to those who lead Washington's public schools.

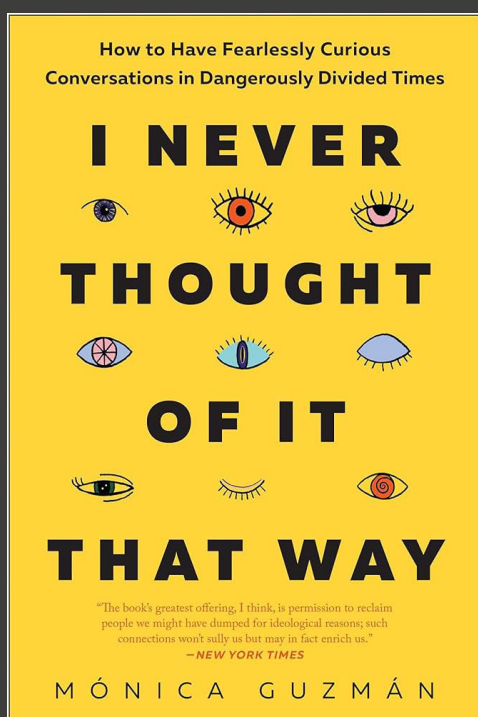
In announcing this year's selection, WASA Executive Director Joel Aune noted that through continuous improvement and innovative initiatives, Banner and his team are building a stronger, more united community that supports public education and champions equity for all.

"Receiving the Washington State Superintendent of the Year award is an incredible honor, but this recognition truly belongs to the dedicated educators, staff, students, families, and community members of our district," said Banner. "Their

unwavering commitment to excellence, and equity in educating our students, make our schools a place where every child can thrive. This award is a testament to the collective passion, teamwork, and hard work that drive our success every day. I am proud to serve alongside such an inspiring team, and I share this celebration with each of them."

You can read the pertaining press release about this prestigious award [here](#).

WASA BOOK CORNER



In this month's Book Corner, Shawn Batstone writes about the book *I Never Thought of it That Way* by Seattle journalist, Monica Guzman.

During this time of increased political and social polarization, Mónica Guzmán's *I Never Thought of It That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times* provides a practical approach to turning conflict into connection. Through personal stories and actionable strategies, Guzmán reveals how curiosity can transform even the most challenging conversations into opportunities for understanding.

Drawing from her experience as a journalist who thrives on great conversations sparked by curious questions, Guzmán explores how asking better questions can break down barriers of misunderstanding and build mutual respect, even when agreement feels out of reach.

Consider these curiosity-driven strategies from the book:

- **"Tell Me More" Mindset:** Shift from debating to learning by asking open-ended questions like, "What experiences led you to see things that way?" This encourages meaningful

dialogue and uncovers shared values.

- **"What Am I Missing?" Check-In:** When confronted with a confusing perspective, pause and ask, "What am I missing?" This reframes the moment from judgment to discovery.
- **Bridge-Building Questions:** Use prompts like, "What do you think people misunderstand most about your views?" to reduce defensiveness and open pathways for understanding.

Consider adding this book to your professional library as a valuable resource for building stronger relationships, navigating challenging conversations, and fostering a culture of understanding and collaboration.

For more tools and techniques to foster productive, solution-oriented dialogue, explore WASA's [Moving from Conflict to Conversation Toolkit](#).

WASA's Professional Assistance Program

As the Assistant Executive Director of WASA, I am committed to ensuring our members have access to the support they need. The WASA Professional Assistance Program is one of our most vital resources, designed to provide confidential and personalized assistance for educational leaders in any situation related to their roles.

Through this program, active WASA members are eligible for a range of services to support both their professional and personal well-being. Whether you need advice, legal counsel, contract reviews, ethics guidance, or mentorship, WASA is here to help.

ADVICE AND LEGAL COUNSEL

If you are facing a challenge or potential issue related to your professional assignment, our experienced executive staff are ready to assist. We can arrange confidential support to ensure you receive the guidance you need. Before reaching out to an attorney, contact WASA first. The program covers initial legal counsel up to \$750, with further support available through our Professional Standards and Ethics Committee.

ETHICS ASSISTANCE

Our team is available to guide you through complex ethical dilemmas, helping you address sensitive issues with professionalism and integrity.

CONTRACT REVIEW

Negotiating or updating your employment contract? WASA provides thorough contract evaluations and tailored recommendations to help you secure the best possible terms.



WASA is here to support you every step of the way. For assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me, Tim Garchow, at tgarchow@wasa-oly.org or by phone at 253.831.5968.

About 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 253.831.5968.

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

JANUARY 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 BEAU WILSON



In this issue, we're proud to spotlight our Professional Learning and Innovation Assistant, Beau Wilson. Beau joined WASA in August 2024.

Beau is a caring and hardworking team member who inspires those around her by building strong, positive relationships and showing a genuine commitment to positively impacting the lives of others.

—Shawn Batstone,
Assistant Executive Director,
Professional Learning & Membership

What is your role at WASA?

I am the Professional Learning and Innovation Assistant. I work closely with Kim Fry and Shawn Batstone.

What does your job entail?

My job entails assisting with the implementation and utilization of AI initiatives through [WASAbot.AI](#). Along with that, I plan details to coordinate conferences and Professional Learning events.

What do you like most about your job?

I am strongly dedicated to public education and find fulfillment in being part of systems that sustain and enhance both the educational structure and the people it serves.

How has WASA changed since you were hired?

While I have only been a part of WASA for the past six months, I find that our capacity as a team to serve our membership has grown. Since I have started, the availability of AI offerings have also increased.

What is your favorite memory at WASA?

My favorite memories are always production days. Working remotely is wonderful, but there is something special about us all coming together for an event. Everyone has a unique role in the process and it feels good to see the outcome of the hard work come to fruition.

What were you doing before being hired at WASA?

Before joining WASA, I was a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Community and Family Liaison for Tumwater School District. In that role, I was devoted to supporting families, students, and administrators through staff listening groups and weekly lunch groups for LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC students.

What do you do when you aren't working?

I love to read all sorts of genres and listen to podcasts. I enjoy wood working, welding, home improvement, and art projects. My children are both in competitive sports, so a lot of my time is spent watching and practicing with them. A newer hobby of mine is riding motorcycles.

Best vacation you've been to?

I don't think I have a best vacation—I have traveled a lot, and each place is beautiful in their own right. The most important part of the trip is the people. I am excited to go to Portugal in the next year to visit family I have yet to meet.

Where's your favorite place in the world?

My home. My husband and I worked really hard to purchase the house and the kids have grown up there. I always wanted to have the house that all the kids wanted to hang out, and that is exactly what it has turned into. It is beautiful to have a home that people find comfortable and safe.

Reflect a bit on your professional mentor.

In 2020, I came to Shawn Batstone as a concerned parent because my daughter was dealing with issues of discrimination. Immediately, I saw Shawn was doing hard work and I knew I wanted to help. Eventually, he created the role of DEI Community and Family Liaison for me. I was in that role for three years. I have never met someone who advocates for others like Shawn does. He believes that the success of an organization rests in uplifting those in the system and creating opportunities. I feel that we share the same commitment and belief in public education. I love that at WASA, we continue to be a system of support for administrators.

CONTACT US

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WASA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Bob Maxwell, Pullman

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Shaun Carey, Enumclaw

PAST PRESIDENT

Mike Villarreal, Hoquiam

SECRETARY

Dana Rosenbach, North Mason

TREASURER

John Sander, Franklin Pierce



January

JANUARY 23

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

JANUARY 23

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

JANUARY 24

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

JANUARY 30

Women In Leadership: Dealing with Difficult
Conversations with Dignity and Grace
Virtual
12 – 1 p.m.

February

FEBRUARY 3-5

Artificial Intelligence Innovation Summit
Seatac

FEBRUARY 4

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

FEBRUARY 5

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

FEBRUARY 10

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

FEBRUARY 10

Mentor Academy
Virtual
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 13

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

FEBRUARY 21

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

FEBRUARY 27

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

March

MARCH 5

Stevens Clay Lunch & Learn: Student Discipline
Virtual
12 – 1 p.m.

MARCH 6

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

MARCH 12

ERNN Training
ESD 101
8:30 – 10 a.m.

MARCH 13

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

MARCH 14

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

MARCH 15-18

Spring Conference for Small School Leaders
Wenatchee

MARCH 24

Mentor Academy
Virtual
8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

MARCH 24

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

MARCH 27

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

MARCH 28

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

