

FEBRUARY 2025



NEWS

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



"Aligned with its mission and beliefs, WASA is committed to leading, serving, and supporting current and aspiring leaders to create systems and equitable learning environments where each and every student can learn and achieve their educational goals and aspirations."

– WASA Educational Equity Statement
Approved by the WASA Board—April, 2022

Dear WASA Members,

With most schools at or about their 90th day in session, we now turn our focus to the second half of the 2024-25 school year. This is an ideal moment to reaffirm our shared commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). These principles are not buzzwords or political talking points—they are the foundation of WASA's **Educational Equity Statement** and the core of our work: to ensure each and every student can learn, and achieve their educational goals and aspirations.

Diversity, at its core, represents the rich range of human differences within our schools and communities—differences in race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, religion, language, and beyond. **Equity** is about ensuring that these differences do not predict educational outcomes. It is not simply about equal access but about achieving fair outcomes for all students by removing systemic barriers. **Inclusion** means creating environments where every student feels a sense of belonging, safety, and respect, and where their unique needs and backgrounds are recognized and valued.

Recent political rhetoric misrepresents these principles, casting them as divisive. It is crucial for us, as educational leaders, to rise above these mischaracterizations. DEI is not about preferential treatment or political agendas; it's about recognizing and addressing the diverse needs of our student populations to ensure all have the opportunity to succeed.

In today's climate, parents, board members, and staff may question or even challenge the commitment of school district leaders to DEI. This is why it's more important than ever to articulate what DEI is—and what it is not. DEI is a commitment to fairness, respect, and opportunity for all students. By distinguishing these principles from political rhetoric, we reinforce their true purpose and importance.

We must be unwavering in our commitment to Educational Equity regardless of political affiliation. WASA believes true equity is achieved when barriers are removed and high expectations are upheld for every student, ensuring that success is determined by effort and opportunity, not by background.

Now, more than ever, it's vital for school district leaders to "stay the course." Despite the political noise, our focus must remain on striving for educational equity. This is not just an educational ambition, but a moral imperative.

Thank you for both your dedication to this essential work and your commitment to creating environments where all students thrive and achieve their potentials.

Respectfully,



G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director

WASA Members' Advocacy: Championing Public Education

Thank you, WASA members, for your outstanding level of engagement in our recent **calls to action** on key bills for public education—specifically related to WASA's Big 3. The level of response we witnessed was unprecedented—surpassing anything we've seen from WASA members before—and it demonstrates the collective influence of educational leaders across Washington State.

January 22:

- **SB 5187 (Pupil Transportation):** 2,407 signed in as “Pro”.
- **SB 5192 (MSOC):** 2,539 signed in as “Pro”.
- **SB 5263 (Special Education—Pedersen):** 2,668 signed in as “Pro”.
- **SB 5307 (Special Education—Wellman):** 1,368 signed in as “Pro”.

This effort is making an impact. Legislators are taking notice of the Big 3. Your participation is shifting the conversation in Olympia, elevating the needs of our schools, staff, and students to the forefront of legislative priorities.

We encourage you to continue contributing to the momentum around our legislative effort. Let's keep this momentum going. Stay engaged, stay vocal, and together, we will continue to drive meaningful change for public education and the students under care.

Together, we can make a difference.



The banner features a dark blue background with a yellow and orange geometric design on the left. The text 'Search for Executive Director' is prominently displayed in white. Below it, the application deadline is listed as February 23, 2025. The WASA logo, which includes the words 'EQUITY', 'LEADERSHIP', 'TRUST', and 'ADVOCACY', is shown next to the website URL www.wasa-oly.org/ExecDir2024. On the left side, a 'TIMELINE' section lists the following dates: Selection of Candidates for Interviews (March 3-4, 2025), Preliminary Interviews (March 12-15, 2025), Final Interviews (March 20-22, 2025), and Selection of New Exec Dir (March 26, 2025).

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

WASA
EQUITY | LEADERSHIP | TRUST | ADVOCACY

www.wasa-oly.org/ExecDir2024

Executive Director Search— A Message from Bob Maxwell

The search process for our next executive director is in full swing, as we move closer to securing a successor to Joel Aune who will be retiring from WASA on June 30, 2025.

Current Status & Process Overview

Northwest Leadership Associates is assisting the board with this important search. Thank you to Dennis Ray for volunteering to conduct the search for us, at no cost.

We have introduced several enhancements to the search process to increase member voice. Early in the process, we launched a Thought Exchange Survey to gather feedback from our members on the key qualities and characteristics

desired in our next leader. Your input has been instrumental in shaping the search and selection process.

This interview process will include two rounds:

- **Preliminary Interviews:** Scheduled for Saturday, March 15, 2025.
- **Final Interviews:** Scheduled for Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Next Steps

The application window closes on **February 23, 2025**. Screening will begin shortly afterward, with board members—elected representatives from across the state—serving on the screening and interview teams.

Announcement of Selected Candidate

Our goal is to extend a contract offer to the top candidate and announce the appointment during the week of March 24. The new executive director will officially come on board at WASA July 1, 2025.

The board is committed to selecting a leader who will continue to propel our association forward. I'm pleased to say that the process is progressing smoothly, and we're on track to find the right individual for this critical role.

Best regards,

Bob Maxwell
WASA President



Thaynan Knowlton, Clarkston



Tabatha Mires, Manson

Candidates for WASA President-Elect

Thaynan Knowlton (Clarkston) and Tabatha Mires (Manson) have been nominated for the 2025–26 WASA President-elect. We appreciate their commitment to serving WASA and its members—congratulations to both on this distinct honor! The election will take place in August. Information about the candidates will be shared in issues of the **WASA News and Hotline** between now and the election this summer.

UPCOMING WASA EVENTS



Leading Your District's AI Integration

Virtual | Complimentary
February 21 | 12–1 p.m.



Lunch & Learn: Student Records

Virtual | Complimentary
March 5 | 12–1 p.m.



Spring Conference for Small School Leaders

Wenatchee, WA
March 16–18

LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA

— 43RD ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE —

JUNE 22–24, 2025
SPOKANE CONVENTION CENTER

Brought to you by



WASA | AWSP's 43rd Annual Summer Conference!

June 22–24, 2025 | Spokane
"Leadership for a New Era"

The 2025 WASA/AWSP Summer Conference presents an opportunity to shine a light on the accomplishments of the 2024–25 school year and gain insights and ideas for the upcoming year. This year's conference, "Leadership for a New Era" will focus on Fostering Collaborative Cultures, Technology Leadership in Education, Building Resilient Schools, Culturally Responsive Leadership, Leading with Impact, and Transformative Leadership.

Register and learn more [here](#).

REMINDERS

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



Connect with Us

Be sure to follow us on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **X** for information on upcoming conferences and workshops, legislative news and



profile page. Contact [Heather Chard](#) if you have questions or need assistance.

updates, and school news.



In case you missed the most recent edition, a link to the January WASA *Hotline* can be found [here](#).

The most recent edition of the *Hotline* features:

- Leadership Article from Ron Banner
- Mira Gobel on Cultural Competency
- John Sander on Advocacy
- WA Purple Star Award: Chris Woods, Michelle Kuss-Cybula
- Michelle Kuss-Cybula on Mentorship for Women Leaders
- Staff Spotlight on Beau Wilson



WASA Equity Statement

WASA's Educational Statement was adopted by the Board back in April, 2022. The purpose of the statement is to publicly clarify our beliefs and vision, while reinforcing WASA's commitment to supporting you in this important work. We hope the statement will help launch or extend essential conversations in schools and districts about the kind of leadership, culture, and support needed to ensure opportunity and success for every student. View the statement [here](#).



Celebrating Black History Month

February is Black History Month, and the following resources offer teachers a range of materials and activities to utilize in the classroom:

Black History Month 2024 The Library of Congress offers a range of teacher resources, including lesson plans and activities that explore various aspects of Black history. These materials utilize primary sources to provide students with a deeper understanding of historical events and figures.

Classroom resources for Black History Month | PBS NewsHour Classroom PBS provides a curated selection of classroom resources that include videos, lesson plans, and interactive activities. These tools are designed to engage students in discussions about civil rights, historical milestones, and contemporary issues related to Black history.

While these resources can be used for the month of February, they extend beyond the scope of a single month and provide resources that can be utilized throughout the year.

STAY IN THE KNOW



Purple Star Recognition— Application Now Available

This is the second year of Washington State's Purple Star award program. 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. Applications for the 2024–25 school year are being accepted through February 28. To learn more about award criteria and how to apply, visit [our website](#).



Next Level Leaders Now Accepting Applications for Next Level Leaders – Cohort 2

Applications are now open for the second cohort of the Next Level Leaders (NLL) program, set to begin in the summer of 2025. Next Level Leaders is a Leadership Development Academy, specifically designed to prepare educational administrators to succeed within today's demanding environment.

This two-year learning community focuses on developing both individual and system leadership behaviors while providing a professional learning network that fosters a collaborative culture and system-wide commitment to



One Week To Go! Budget Insights for You and Your Team from WASBO

Feb. 11 & 13, 2025
8:30 to 12:00 PM | Virtual

With budget development underway, ensuring your district's financial health is more important than ever! WASBO's 2025 Budget Workshop—happening next week—offers timely insights on enrollment projections, revenue planning, staffing, fund management and legislative impacts to help your team confidently navigate the year ahead. Whether you attend yourself or forward this to your business and finance staff, this virtual workshop is designed to support districts as they move through the budgeting cycle.

Link: [Click here to register](#)



Public Records 2024 Data Collection

The JLARC Public Records Reporting System is now open for reporting 2024 data. Agencies that spent over \$100,000 in staff and legal costs associated with fulfilling public records in 2024 (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31) are required to report ([RCW 40.14.026](#)).

If you meet the \$100,000 reporting threshold or plan to voluntarily report, log into the reporting system to submit your report. Metric guidance and [reporting system](#) instructions can be found on the [JLARC website](#).

If you don't meet the \$100,000 threshold, either: (1) login to the [reporting system](#) to confirm you did not meet the threshold, or (2) email JLARCPublicRecStudy@leg.wa.gov to confirm you did not meet the threshold.

equity.

For more information and to apply, visit www.nll.academy or contact Ashley Barker, Project Lead at ashley@nll.academy.



Apply Now for Gallagher Howard M. Coble Scholarship

Designed to assist talented, under-represented educators to pursue graduate studies that prepare for central office leadership positions. A \$5,000 scholarship will be awarded to an educator who is presently enrolled in or will begin graduate studies in educational leadership by the fall of 2025.

Apply now!

ERNN REGIONAL CONFERENCE



What You Need to Know Going Into Bargaining Season

FEBRUARY 28 • SPOKANE (NEWESD 101)
APRIL 1 • YAKIMA (ESD 105)
MAY 23 • TUMWATER (ESD 113)

ERNN Workshop: What You Need to Know Going Into Bargaining Season

Information, Resources, & Strategies
Presented by ERNN & Stevens Clay

Come join your colleagues from around the region to sharpen your knowledge and skills regarding communication strategies, bargaining rules/basics,

The deadline for reporting is July 1, 2025.

Seeking Nominations

WASA is seeking nominations for the following Board of Directors leadership positions:

- **Superintendent Component Chair-elect** (three-year term—July 1, 2025—June 30, 2028)
- **IPAC Chair-elect** (three-year term—July 1, 2025—June 30, 2028)
- **BPAC Chair-elect** (two-year term—July 1, 2025—June 30, 2027)
- **Principals Component Chair** (completing final year of a two-year term—July 1, 2025—June 30, 2026)

If you are interested in serving in one of these WASA Board positions or making a nomination, please contact **Joel Aune** by February 20.

WASA Honorary Awards Program Launches February 17

WASA is proud to recognize outstanding educational administrators and individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to K–12 education. The **2025 Honorary Awards Program** launches **February 17**, providing an opportunity to celebrate leaders who have demonstrated exceptional impact in their schools, districts, communities, or across the entire state.

Award nominees are considered based on their character, leadership, contributions to student success, and long-standing dedication to public education.

State and Region Awards

- **State Awards** include prestigious recognitions such as the Golden Gavel Award, WASA Leadership Award, and the D.A. Davidson Barbara Mertens Legacy Award, among others. The Learning from Leaders Award, launched for the first time last year, provides a \$5,000 grant to honor exemplary programs that drive student success.
- **At the regional level**, awards recognize

financial facts for bargaining, anticipated bargaining topics, and much more. Stevens Clay will be bringing a wealth of information and resources, and participants will help shape the topics presented based on their individual needs.

This training will be held in three locations and participants are encouraged to register for the time and location that best fits their schedule. Registration can be found at www.ernn.com.

achievements in student leadership, community contributions, program innovation, and long-term service to education.

To learn more about each award, visit the WASA website: [WASA Honorary Awards](#)

Watch for the official launch of this year's WASA Honorary Awards on February 17!



New Board Member!

Rodriguez F. Broadnax, Superintendent of the Grand Coulee Dam School District, has been elected as the Region 171 representative to the WASA Board of Directors. Rod will complete the term of Eastmont Superintendent Becky Berg, who retired December 31. Congratulations and welcome aboard, Rodriguez!

February Elections: Advancing Public Education

February 11 marks a significant day for public education here in Washington State, with 55 school districts running 70 ballot propositions. These measures include EP&O levies, levies for transportation and capital projects, and 6 bond issues. The WASA team sends our best wishes to all of you involved in these campaigns. Good luck!



WASA Offers Its Condolences on the Passing of Dick Harris

WASA extends its deepest condolences to the family, friends, and colleagues of Dick Harris, who passed away recently. Dick was a dedicated and respected educational leader, serving as WASA President in 1991 and as superintendent in Franklin Pierce, Federal Way, and Post Falls. His leadership and commitment to public education left a lasting impact on the students, staff, and communities he served.

During this difficult time, our thoughts are with all who knew and worked with Dick.



Tinker, Learn, Lead: AI in Education

As educational leaders, fostering an environment of experimentation is crucial in supporting the utilization of AI among staff. Encouraging your team to tinker and play with AI tools is a vital part of the learning process—especially considering AI, like any emerging technology, is still in its infancy, and so are we as users. This means both the

Leaders should reinforce that AI imperfections are expected and normal. By embracing these imperfections with a cheerful attitude, you model the value you place on learning to utilize AI and your growth mindset. Watching you fumble and persist with AI illustrates strong executive sponsorship and reassures staff that exploration and revisions are part of the journey.

Promoting a culture where experimentation is valued not only fosters innovation but also builds confidence and self-efficacy in using AI. Remember, our goal is to learn and grow together, embracing the learning curve and evolving with the technology.



The 2025 Legislative Session is underway and the action is fast and furious. Over 1,500 bills have been introduced and all Committees have packed agendas with public hearings and executive action on an overwhelming number of bills. Many of those bills directly or indirectly impact K-12 education; WASA is tracking over 300 bills at this point. Even though bill lists are overflowing, WASA continues to focus on special education, MSOC, and pupil transportation—the “Big Three”—as addressed in [our 2025 Legislative Platform](#).

Bills in each house have been introduced to address the Big Three, with several of them moving. The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee recently adopted bills to address each of our priorities: SB 5263 (special education); SB 5192 (MSOC); and SB 5187 (pupil transportation). Each bill now awaits action by the Senate Ways & Means Committee. The House Appropriations Committee heard bills addressing two priorities: HB 1338 (MSOC) and three bills addressing special education: HB 1310, HB 1267, and HB 1357. HB 1310 addresses tiered multipliers and several key policy, while HB 1267 focuses on the enrollment cap, and HB 1357 slightly modifies multipliers and addresses inclusionary practices. All four of these bills await executive action in the Appropriations Committee. For details, please see [This Week in Olympia](#).

Other than HB 1338 (MSOC), which positively responds to all of WASA's requests, the bills have disparate policy fixes and funding mechanisms. Nevertheless, it is extremely positive legislators are paying attention to these bills. Changes to each of the bills are expected as they move through the legislative journey. Given the fiscal impacts of each issue, final fixes to the legislation will likely not be hammered out until late into the session, as legislators begin to focus on crafting the 2025-27 Operating Budget.

Regardless of the coming changes in these bills, legislators have been hearing common messages from school administrators, school directors, other educators, and parents. In order to succeed, we need administrators (and our colleagues) to engage in the process, from start to finish. So far, literally thousands of educators have stepped up to note their “Pro” position on the Big Three bills. We also knew that speaking with “one voice” would be exceedingly important—and, for the most part, we have been on the same page.

We continue to encourage you to stay up-to-date with our weekly [This Week in Olympia](#) newsletter, as well as our weekly [Legislative Report Podcast](#). To keep on message, we continue to encourage you to use our education funding website, www.waschoolfunding.org, and our [Advocacy Toolkit](#), with talking points, graphics, and communication tools. Recently, we added useful, one-page policy briefs on each of the Big Three and also posted a useful [Data Dashboard](#) to display common fiscal data comparing districts' expenditures vs state funding.

At WASA, we recognize that leadership in education extends beyond the walls of our schools and into the halls of policymaking. As a community of committed education leaders, we are dedicated to ensuring that your voice is heard where it matters most—at both the state and national levels.

Advocacy is at the heart of WASA's mission. We work tirelessly to represent school administrators, ensuring that policymakers understand the challenges and priorities of education leaders. Through legislative engagement, testimony, and direct communication with lawmakers, WASA amplifies the collective voice of school district leaders to shape policies that support students, schools, and communities. We encourage all members to stay engaged—your participation in legislative efforts strengthens our impact and advances meaningful change in education policy.

Staying one step ahead of evolving education policies and emerging trends is essential for effective leadership. WASA delivers timely updates and opportunities to help school district leaders proactively navigate new regulations, capitalize on emerging trends, and lead with vision and innovation.

WASA is more than a professional organization—it is a powerful network of leaders committed to shaping the future of public education. Do you know a colleague who would benefit from WASA membership? Invite them to join today:

[Apply here.](#)

RESOURCES

This month's featured resources include the following:

- [5 insights from top school administrators in 2024](#) | K-12 Dive
- [Watch for these 4 AI trends in classrooms in 2025](#) | K-12 Dive
- [WASA FAQ Purchase or Sale of Property by a Public School District](#)
- WASA School Funding Website: www.waschoolfunding.org
- WASA [Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- [Study finds gender gap with children when it comes to negotiating](#) | Science Daily
- [1 in 3 Teens Reports Experiencing Racism in School](#) | K-12 Dive

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR

February

- 02.03–05.25** Artificial Intelligence Innovation Summit | Seatac
- 02.04.25** Building Bridges in Education Lunch & Learn | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 02.05.25** Special Education Directors Academy | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 02.10.25** Early Career Superintendent Academy | 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 02.10.25** Mentor Academy | 8:30-10:30 a.m.
- 02.13.25** Global Instructional Leadership Network | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 02.21.25** Leading Your District's AI Integration | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 02.27.25** WSSDA Annual Conference

March

- 03.05.25** Lunch & Learn with Stevens Clay: Student Discipline | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 03.06.25** Special Education Directors Academy | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 03.12.25** ERNN Training | ESD 101 | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 03.13.25** Global Instructional Leadership Network | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 03.14.25** Women in Leadership Lunch & Learn | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 03.15–18.25** Spring Conference for Small School Leaders | Wenatchee
- 03.24.25** Early Career and Mentor Academies | 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- 03.27.25** 2nd & 3rd Year Superintendents | 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- 03.27.25** Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy | 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- 03.28.25** Leading Your District's AI Integration | 12:00-1:00 p.m.

April

- 04.03.25** Lunch & Learn with Stevens Clay: District Liability | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 04.24.25** Global Instructional Leadership Network | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 04.24.25** Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy | 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- 04.25.25** Leading Your District's AI Integration | 12:00-1:00 p.m.



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

This month's Sponsor Spotlight features WASA's Diamond-level sponsors—**Right At School** and **WSIPC**. We are grateful for their unwavering support of our members and programs! Click their link to learn more about them. View all of our amazing Diamond-level sponsors [on our website](#).



Right At School





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