

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](#).



"It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders."

— Washington State Constitution, Article IX, Section 1

Next Monday, the 2025 Legislative Session begins, and we resume the battle to secure ample funding for our schools and the children in our care. By now, you are aware of our emphasis for the upcoming session: **The Big 3—Special Education, Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation**.

Our success in this session will depend on three key factors: **member engagement, message discipline, and unity**. By staying focused on the Big Three and ensuring our advocacy is widespread, unified, and consistent, we can amplify our impact. At the same time, we must remain vigilant and ready to defend against policy proposals that could compromise public education, weaken local control, exacerbate inequities, or harm children.

Message Discipline and Unity: The Power of the Big Three

This session, our primary offensive focus is to ensure legislators prioritize:

- **Special Education:** Fully funding the actual costs of service and program delivery, including increasing tiered multipliers and removing the arbitrary funding cap.
- **MSOC:** Addressing the growing gap between state allocations and the rising costs of operating schools, including utilities, insurance, and transportation.
- **Transportation:** Reforming the current formula to be transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.

Staying disciplined and unified around these priorities will allow us to speak with one voice, clearly conveying the critical needs of our schools and students. Legislators hear many competing messages during the session. Member unity around the Big Three will ensure our message stands out and resonates.

The Importance of Defense

While offense is critical, **defensive advocacy** is equally vital to our success. We must remain alert to policy proposals that may undermine public education, whether by creating unfunded mandates, threatening equitable funding, or eroding local control. Defense involves identifying potential risks early, articulating the negative consequences, and mobilizing swiftly to protect our schools. Poorly conceived policies can have lasting, damaging effects on students, educators, and communities.

Call to Action

To win this session, we must fully engage and hang together. All WASA members—superintendents and non-superintendents alike—must deliver a unified and unwavering message to legislators. Your voice is essential in advancing the Big Three priorities while resolutely opposing policies that could harm public education. Together we can influence policy and secure the provision of ample resources toward the betterment of public education.

The decisions made during this session will shape the future of education for years to come. Let's make sure our

collective efforts reflect our commitment to a stronger, better-supported public education system; one that provides the educational experience our students need and deserve.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Joel Aune". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director

For legislative information and advocacy resources, click here:

www.waschoolfunding.org and
drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-2vr6fJdatiP4ZjsiNbKQl9XG0gddoW1.

UPCOMING WASA EVENTS



Legislative Conference

SeaTac Hilton
January 11 & 12



Lunch & Learn: Public Records

Virtual
January 16 | 12–1 p.m.



Leading Your District's AI Integration

Virtual
January 24 | 12–1 p.m.



Women in Leadership: Dealing with Difficult Conversations

Virtual
January 30 | 12–1 p.m.



AI Summit 2025

Seatac, WA
February 3–5



Engaging Perspectives,
Fiscal Communications,
&
Strengthening Labor
Relations

Lunch & Learn: Building Bridges in Education

Virtual
February 4 | 12–1 p.m.

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 profile page. Contact Heather Chard at hchard@wasa-oly.org if you have questions or need assistance.



Connect with Us

Be sure to follow us on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **Twitter** for information on upcoming conferences and workshops, legislative news and updates, and school news.





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

The most recent edition of the *Hotline* features:

- Advocacy Article from Dana Rosenbach
- Ron Banner on Student Youth Councils
- AASA Board Updates
- WA Purple Star Award articles from Kathi Weight and Ben Ferney
- Staff Spotlight on Heather Chard



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](#).

STAY IN THE KNOW



Celebrating Black History Month

February is Black History Month, and the Center for Racial Justice has a [robust bank of Resources](#) available for all educators. Established in 1976, Black History Month has been designated in the United States and Canada to focus attention on the contributions of African Americans to the United States. It honors all Black people from all periods of U.S. history, from the enslaved people first brought over from Africa in the early 17th century to African Americans living in the United States today. While these resources can be used



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.

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



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 equity.

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

EducationWeek®

Equity Spotlight: Fostering a Culture of Belonging

Education Week has created a curated collection of articles exploring key strategies for advancing educational equity. Topics include targeting funding for low-income students, expanding access to AP courses, and ensuring equitable use of technology. Learn how school leaders can cultivate a culture of belonging while addressing the academic and social-emotional needs of every student.

[View the articles here.](#)

Applications for the 2024–25 school year are being accepted through February. To learn more about award criteria and how to apply, visit [our website](#).

Upcoming Membership Survey

In a just a couple of weeks, on January 15, WASA will send out our 2025 Membership Survey to collect the opinions and perceptions of our members.

WASA is committed to using your feedback to improve our services and align them to members' needs. To support this effort, WASA has partnered with Hanover Research to design and administer this survey.

We invite you to participate in this survey starting January 15 & closing February 4. Please be on the lookout for communication from WASA that will share the survey distribution link.

The data we collect will inform strategies for improving our services to our WASA members.

Please contact [Joel Aune](#) with any questions you might have about the survey.

FAFSA is Now Available

The 2025-26 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is now available to students, earlier than expected, thanks to successful beta testing. It's essential to support students in preparing for the FAFSA. Completion of the FAFSA is **one of the best predictors** of whether a high school senior will go on to college. [Click here](#) to learn how to get FAFSA-ready!



Immigration Policy Webinar

January 15 | 2:00 p.m. | Zoom

The Trump Administration has signaled interest in making significant updates to U.S. immigration policy and enforcement that will affect public schools.

Join AASA for a webinar with immigration attorney, Mary Kate Fernandez from Adams & Reese, who will provide guidance to prepare your students and staff in the coming months.

Specifically, the webinar will cover:

- A review of Plyler v. Doe and related federal restrictions on sharing student data
- Employment implications for DACA recipients
- The outlook for the J-1 and H-1B visa programs
- Best practices for working with immigration agents and supporting students

[Register Today](#)



In the Spotlight: WA Supts Bryon and Krestin Bahr

In the January edition of *School Administrator Magazine*, AASA features eight superintendent families throughout the nation. This includes the unique superintendent pairing of Washington State's Bryon, of Rainier SD, and Krestin Bahr, of Peninsula SD. You can read the article about how their roles in education strengthen their partnership in this newest issue, available [here](#).

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

Search for Executive Director

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 has launched the search for the next Executive Director. The official announcement of the opening was issued last month. To learn more about the position, including the application process, [click here](#). Reach out to [Dennis Ray](#), [Tom Rockefeller](#), or [Joel Aune](#) if you have questions about the position.

Thank you to Dennis Ray, Northwest Leadership Associates, for offering to conduct the search free of charge.



On Monday, January 13, the Legislature convenes its first year of the 69th Biennial Session, wherein the Legislature

will adopt a new Operating Budget (along with a Capital Construction Budget and a Transportation Budget) for the 2025–27 biennium. While legislators will delve into a multitude of policy bills, covering a vast range of issues, a major focus will be on crafting a new two-year Operating Budget. In fact, adopting an Operating Budget is the only specific task the Legislature is required to complete.

State agencies (including OSPI) submitted Budget requests in September; the Economic & Review Forecast Council (ERFC) released its fourth and final quarterly state revenue update last month; the Caseload Forecast Council released its final update of entitlement caseloads; and Governor Inslee recently released his 2025–27 Operating Budget proposal. Of course, in the midst of these events, the General Election was held in November, wherein state government received a major facelift, including the election of a new governor, several other new statewide officers, and over 30 new legislators. These events set the final stage for the 2025 Session.

There is not enough space to fully review all of these important issues in WASA News, so be on the lookout for a comprehensive discussion in an early edition of *This Week in Olympia (TWIO)*. Just a few quick clips here.

Agency requests seek Maintenance Level (required cost changes due to caseloads, enrollment, and inflation) increases of \$3.78 billion in 2025–27 and \$4.02 billion in 2027–29 beyond the current 2023–25 Operating Budget. Additionally, Policy Level (discretionary spending) requests would increase spending by \$6.76 billion in 2025–27 and \$9.42 billion in 2027–29. The total requested over four years is \$23.98 billion. Given that revenue is expected to increase by \$10.4 billion over the next four years (\$5.0 billion in 2025–27; \$5.4 billion in 2027–29), you can see why there is so much talk about a budget shortfall. It should be noted that the definition of “Maintenance Level” is less-than-fixed. Individual agencies, the House, the Senate, and the Governor’s office rarely have consistent Maintenance Levels in the budgets; that is, until a final budget is crafted, agreed upon, and adopted. For example, in Governor Inslee’s budget proposal, he requests \$4.94 billion and \$7.06 billion in 2025–27 and 2027–29, respectively—a total of \$12.0 billion, compared to agency requests of \$7.8 billion.

Speaking of the Governor’s Budget, in addition to the \$7.8 billion in Maintenance Level requests, he proposes \$3.17 billion in Policy Level spending over four years, for a total of \$10.97 billion. He proposes to pay for the increased spending with over \$1.0 billion in fund transfers and \$4.43 billion in new revenue (that is new and/or increased taxes) in 2025–27 (a four year total of \$14.1 billion) (NOTE: he also proposes to use \$1.6 billion of the Budget Stabilization Account (BSA) in 2025–27, but then would transfer \$1.6 billion from the General Fund to the BSA in 2027–29). Inslee also proposes a series of reductions—in addition to his call for state agency spending freezes (hiring, travel, equipment) last month. For K–12 education, the proposed Maintenance Level increase is significant—approximately \$2.3 billion. His Policy Level requests, however, are a net reduction of \$220 million.

It was not really expected the governor would support *WASA’s 2025 Legislative Platform*—which urges the Legislature to amply fund Special Education, Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation, the so-called Big Three—however, it is disappointing he continued to focus his efforts (and budget requests) on issues beyond the state’s paramount duty. We are trying to engage the incoming governor and his policy team and there is at least a bit of hope he will be more receptive to supporting K–12 education. We will be keeping a close eye on his first State of the State Address and his budget proposals—if he releases any.

Our Big Three coalition (WASA, along with AESD, WSSDA, WASBO, AWSP, AEA, WACTA, WSPTA) has been meeting with legislators for the past nine months and we will be immediately jumping into the fray as the Session begins. Legislation for each of our priorities is being drafted (or has been drafted) and we expect those bills to be introduced in the early days of the session—we will keep you posted.

While we will have an uphill battle to successfully move our requests over the finish line—especially due to the ongoing conversation about budget troubles—we will continue to remind legislators that the Big Three are constitutionally required programs and they must be prioritized. Our messaging, however, will fall well short if we do not have strong, ongoing support from our members. We have laid the groundwork over the last nine months, but it is incumbent on you to “tell your stories” and carry the message to your legislators.

We will continue to provide you with resources throughout the session, including our weekly legislative newsletter, *This Week in Olympia (TWIO)*, and our weekly *Legislative Report podcast*. We will also continue to update our school funding website, www.waschoolfunding.org, and our *Advocacy Toolkit*. We encourage you to use the Toolkit to build your knowledge about our requests and to follow the messaging. It is extremely important for our members to be engaged; however, it is just as important to maintain “message discipline” so legislators are hearing a consistent

message from superintendents, business managers, principals, school directors, and all other members in our coalition.

One area of messaging that requires consistency is funding. We are requesting policy revisions; however, ample funding of special education, MSOC, and pupil transportation is the ultimate goal. A key resource to help align our members as you engage on the funding question is a series of [sample templates](#) we recently added to our Toolkit. We encourage you to use one of the templates to display your district's funding shortfalls (state funding vs district expenditures) of the Big Three.

We have also prepared short policy briefs on special education, MSOC, and pupil transportation that you can use to further understand the issues and our requests—and use with legislators, many of which do not understand how these issues are funded. The briefs will be shared with attendees at the [WASA/WSSDA/WASBO Legislative Conference](#) on January 11–12, and will be added to the Toolkit next week.

The 2025 Legislative Session is the “long” session, scheduled for 105 days, so you will have ample opportunity to engage in the process. As noted above we cannot do this work without you. To echo Joel Aune’s message at the start of this WASA News: “Our success in this session will depend on three key factors: **member engagement, message discipline, and unity**. By staying focused on the Big Three and ensuring our advocacy is widespread, unified, and consistent, we can amplify our impact.”

KNOW AND LEAN ON WASA

Your Partner in Leadership Excellence

WASA is your professional association, dedicated to advocating for public education and committed to serving and supporting education leaders across the state of Washington. This year, one of our top priorities is to elevate member awareness of the resources and supports available to you.

Legislative Updates and Alerts

Stay informed on key legislative developments affecting education in Washington State. Through [This Week in Olympia \(TWIO\)](#), WASA provides timely legislative updates and alerts, keeping members informed about potential policy changes and their impact on schools. Throughout the 2025 Legislative Session, Assistant Executive Director Dan Steele will be posting short, informative podcast episodes on a regular basis. This podcast focuses on key legislative issues to keep WASA members informed of hot topics and emerging conversations in Olympia. Sign up for Dan Steele’s weekly podcast [HERE](#).

Tools for Legislative Advocacy

WASA has built a robust bank of resources to support members in their advocacy efforts. The website [waschoolfunding.org](#) provides useful—and easy to understand—information on the current funding dilemma so many school districts currently face. The second resource is a [Tool Kit](#), complete with talking points, videos, social media content, and other communication resources—to assist and align our members as you engage with your own legislators.

RESOURCES

This month’s featured resources include the following:

- [Best Practices for Physical Safety](#) | Hanover Research
- [How to Build a Classroom That Supports Difficult Conversations](#) | Ed Week
- [IDEA 2004 Turns 20: How the Landmark Reauthorization Changed Special Education](#) | K-12 Dive
- [Larry Ferlazzo’s 9 Education Predictions for 2025](#) | Ed Week

- [Planning Together: A Playbook for Student Personal Device Policies](#) | Office of Educational Technology
- [Without AI Literacy, Students Will Be 'Unprepared for the Future,' Educators Say](#) | Ed Week
- [How Generative AI Can Make Students More Creative – And Why That Matters](#) | Ed Week
- [AI IN Education](#) | K-12 Dive

Resources for Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month:

- [The Best of Our Resources](#) | Southern Poverty Law Center
- [Teaching About Martin Luther King Jr.](#) | Civil Rights Teaching
- [Resources for Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#) | Edutopia
- [Black History Month Resource Guide for Educators](#) | Center for Racial Justice in Education
- [Classroom Resources for Black History Month](#) | PBS

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR

January

- 01.09.25** Special Education Directors Academy | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 01.11-12.25** WASA • WSSDA • WASBO Legislative Conference | Seatac
- 01.13.25** Mentor Academy | 8:30-10:30 a.m.
- 01.13.25** Early Career Superintendent Academy | 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 01.16.25** Stevens Clay Lunch & Learn: Public Records | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 01.23.25** Global Instructional Leadership Network | 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 01.23.25** Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy | 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- 01.24.25** Leading Your District's AI Integration | 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 01.30.25** WIL: Dealing with Difficult Conversations with Dignity and Grace | 12:00-1:00 p.m.

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.



SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT

This month's Sponsor Spotlight features WASA's Diamond-level sponsors—**Renaissance** and **Workpointe**. 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](#).

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