

JUNE 2025

HOTLINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



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Change, and
Collective
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**SUMMER
REFLECTIONS
AND LOOKING
TO THE FUTURE**
Summer brings
opportunities to
reflect & lead.

HOTLINE

IN THIS ISSUE OF

SUMMER BRINGS REFLECTION—AND A RENEWED CALL TO LEAD

This summer's edition of the WASA *Hotline* offers both a reflection and a forward focus as we close out the 2024–25 school year. President Bob Maxwell opens with a final message that captures a year shaped by unity and bold leadership. Executive Director Joel Aune shares a forward-looking message tied to WASA's newly adopted goals and action steps, reinforcing our shared commitment to Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy. James Everett invites readers to engage in advocacy—WASA's second organizational pillar—while Alicen Gaytley challenges us to move from intention to action in our pursuit of inclusive leadership.

In this issue, you'll also meet the candidates for 2025–26 WASA President-elect and welcome newly elected Board members who bring fresh energy and vision to our work. Dan Steele offers an early look at the 2026 Legislative Session, helping us anticipate what lies ahead in education policy. This issue also includes a special interview with Joel Aune, who reflects on his 42 years in education and leadership. We honor the legacy of retiring superintendents Marty Brewer, Traci Pierce, and Jo Moccia, and celebrate this year's honorary and Purple Star award recipients.

And most importantly, enjoy photo highlights from the Summer Conference and preview professional learning opportunities scheduled for the coming months.

Thank you for your continued leadership in every region of our state.

Thank you to Bob Maxwell, James Everett, Alicen Gaytley, Marty Brewer, Traci Pierce, Jo Moccia, Tom Venable, Joel Aune, Dan Steele, Kim Fry, Shawn Batstone, Tim Garchow, Dominique Wilson, Kaley VonVolkli, 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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2024–25: A YEAR OF CHALLENGE, CHANGE, AND COLLECTIVE RESOLVE

As I reflect on this past year serving as WASA President, I do so with deep humility and even deeper gratitude. The 2024–25 school year has been one of the most challenging in my recent memory—not only for our local districts but for the entire public education system in Washington State.

We have endured an extraordinarily difficult legislative session, marked by persistent underfunding and stalled momentum toward meaningful, equitable school finance reform. Federal funding reductions and a series of executive orders added to the instability, creating confusion, uncertainty, and intensified political polarization, especially around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. These are not abstract debates; they strike at the heart of our daily work and the values we strive to uphold in our schools.

And yet, through all of this, I've found inspiration and hope in each of you. Your knowledge, innovation, resilience, and unwavering commitment have not only sustained public education but have also strengthened it. You've led with heart,

I will always be grateful for the support I received from both WASA staff and members throughout this journey. Your partnership, encouragement, and shared purpose made this experience deeply meaningful.

with courage, and with a steadfast focus on students and communities—even when the path has been unclear.

This year also brought transition within WASA. We saw longtime colleagues and friends move on, leaving behind legacies that have helped shape the organization into what it is today. At the same time, we welcomed a new generation of WASA leaders—full of energy, insight, and passion—ready to guide us into the future. Their leadership, combined with yours, gives me tremendous confidence

in what lies ahead.

I am incredibly thankful for the opportunity to have served as your WASA President. In my recent memory, I cannot think of a time when collective leadership mattered more. I will always be grateful for the support I received from both WASA staff and members throughout this journey. Your partnership, encouragement, and shared purpose made this experience deeply meaningful.

As I transition out of this role, I look forward to continuing to support WASA in a new capacity—as a colleague, an advocate, and a believer in the power of public education and those who lead it.

With appreciation,
Bob Maxwell



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

LEADING AMIDST POLARIZATION: A FINAL MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Over the past few months, I've spent a good deal of time reflecting on my career as an educator. And today, as I step away from this role, I find myself especially mindful of the profound

responsibility—and privilege—it has been to walk alongside you in leadership the past seven years. Serving as your Executive Director has been the greatest honor of my professional life. In addition to your brilliance and integrity, what has always inspired me most is your collective resolve to do what's best and right for kids, even when the path is difficult or dangerous.

Today, that path may feel more grueling than ever. We are leading in a time marked by division, polarization, and ideological strife that all-too-often spills into our schools and board rooms. Public education—once a cornerstone of unity where communities come together around a shared belief in the power of learning—is increasingly a flashpoint in cultural and political conflict.

And yet, I remain convinced: schools can still be the bulwark that brings our communities together. Schools are one of the few remaining places where people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences come together around a singular purpose—our children.

That's where you come in.

Leadership in this environment requires strategy and vision. It requires courage, clarity, and a deep commitment to building unity. Your role is not just to manage schools, but to lead people—to bring them together, build connections, and inspire collective action in service of something far greater than any single perspective.

You do this by running to the fire. By listening deeply. By centering your decisions on what is best for students. By cultivating trust and modeling dignity. And by creating spaces where people feel a strong sense of belonging. Spaces where hope can grow—even amidst conflict.

We don't get to choose the times we live in, but we do get to choose how we lead. And the choice to lead with integrity, empathy, and resolve is one you've made again and again.

As I step away from WASA, I do so with full confidence in your leadership. You possess the strength, toughness, wisdom, and moral compass to navigate whatever comes next—and to do so in a way that keeps kids at the center of everything.

Though I'm leaving this role, I look forward to continuing to support leadership in public education—just not 65 hours a week anymore. I love WASA. I love public education. And know that I have immense respect and admiration for each of you.

Thank you for your tireless commitment, your partnership, and your belief in what public education can be. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve and support you. And never forget—you ARE making a difference.

Respectfully,

G. Joel Aune
WASA Executive Director

2025–26 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 Jeff Snell and his team will 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 and resources for all component members supporting individual leadership, system growth, and well-being.

Action B: Develop pathways for all district-level positions that attract leaders who reflect the diversity of our student populations.

Action C: Leverage the expertise within each administrator and resources across the state by collaborating with our members and educational partners to address complex educational challenges.

Trust

Lead with integrity and inclusion to deepen member belonging, build cultural competence, and strengthen public trust in education.

Action A: Expand relationships and member engagement through personalized onboarding, outreach to underserved groups, and intentional support for leaders in role transitions.

Action B: Provide strategic guidance and resources to strengthen and broaden the ability of members to foster trust in public education.

Action C: Facilitate peer collaboration, emotional resilience, and wellness through real-time leadership supports.

Advocacy

In alignment with our partners, amplify WASA's voice and influence to secure equitable, sustainable resources and policies that uphold the public education

Action A: Provide leadership and support for engagement with legislators and partners to influence education resources and policy.

Action B: Advance unified budget and policy positions that ensure fair and ample resources for all students and districts.

Action C: Expand tools and member resources to assist their active engagement in federal policy discussions to positively impact all students.

Have YOU read the latest WASA News?

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

- 2026 Legislative Platform
- Farewell event for Dan Steele & Joel Aune
- Third video of WASA president-elect candidates
- Resources to celebrate Juneteenth & Pride Month
- Superintendent of the Year Application Open
- WASA board elections

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



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.

The Work Ahead Requires Us

In this issue of Hotline, Superintendent James Everett highlights the third pillar of WASA's Mission Statement—Advocacy.

It's easy to feel discouraged. After months of testimony, coordinated campaigns, and clear-eyed appeals for action, the Legislature fell short—again. Special education, MSOCs, and pupil transportation remain underfunded. The frustration is real—and justified.

But if we let disappointment define our response, we miss the moment.

Advocacy is not a sprint through a single session. It is a long game of influence, built on trust, credibility, and the courage to return to the table. As educational leaders, we cannot

afford to operate in silos. If legislators are overwhelmed by our individual messages, then the path forward is clear: Unify. Align. Persist.

This year, we modeled what it looks like when district leaders, regional partners, and state associations speak with one voice. That momentum must continue. *It's time to see ourselves not only as system leaders, but as educators of policymakers.* And we must do it with empathy and professionalism—because animosity won't bring about the change our students need.

In the spirit of WASA's mission, advocacy is not an option. It's a responsibility. The public education system our children and communities deserve cannot be built on passive hope. It demands

relentless, informed, and united advocacy.

Let's elevate our strategy, extend our reach, and speak not just for our own districts—but for the collective future of Washington's students.

The work ahead requires us.



James Everett, Superintendent of the Meridian School District, serves as one of WASA's representatives on the AASA Governing Board.

BLAST FROM THE PAST Hotline Nineteen Years Ago

Check out the **January 2006 issue of Hotline**, which included:

- The 2006 "short" legislative session centering on adjustments to the 2005–07 state operating budget, with Governor Gregoire emphasizing early learning and high school success.
- Executive Director Jill Jacoby's retirement announcement and launch of the search for her successor.
- 2006 WASA/WSSDA Legislative Conference Preview
- The School System Improvement Resource Guide (SSIRG), developed jointly by WASA and OSPI, was highlighted in AASA's School Administrator magazine. It showcases planning tools for systemic school reform, used by districts such as Warden, South Kitsap, and Kennewick.
- Eight school districts, including Auburn, Kent, and Spokane, received the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Association of School Business Officials for FY 2004, recognizing transparency and accountability in school finance.

You can view this historical artifact and others on our website. Throughout the year, we will continue to highlight and compare current issues and topics with those of the past.



EDUCATIONAL EQUITY STATEMENT

WASA believes that Educational Equity, for each and every student, will be attained when barriers are removed throughout the system, ensuring equal access and opportunity for students to achieve successful outcomes. WASA will commit to providing vision, leadership, and support to district leaders as they take action to eradicate gaps that are a result of systemic inequities in our schools.



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. Grounded in the following definitions, Educational Equity is embraced as the potent combination of cultural competency, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Therefore, 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. View our full educational equity statement [here](#).

ON THE TOPIC OF EQUITY

Inclusion Begins with Intention

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, Alicen Gaytley, Director of Teaching and Learning, Quincy School District, shares her thinking on inclusion...

Inclusion begins with intention. This requires more than simply fitting students into existing structures. In Quincy, we are aligning our systems with our mission: to create a culture of belonging that empowers every student to achieve academic excellence and graduate prepared for a successful future. Moving our purpose into action has led us to ask: How do students see themselves as valued and prepared for what comes next? Inclusion calls us to design teaching and learning experiences intentionally, so every student, in every

setting, can see where they are headed, know they belong on the path, and believe their efforts matter for where they go next.

Inclusion is shaped by perspective. This means listening deeply to student, family, and community voices to co-create goals that are actionable for learning and growth. Over the past year, we have developed our [Profile of a Graduate](#) to do just that. A community night brought together local leaders, families, and students to reflect on what success should look like for Quincy graduates. Our high school designed postsecondary seminars that gathered input on the skills that matter most to students. We connected these ideas to competencies from CTE pathways, Big Picture Learning, and SEL standards. Our leadership team refined the language to be more student-friendly and strengths-based. More than a poster for our walls, this shared process ensures that our goals represent our local values.

Inclusion strengthens agency. As we implement our Profile of a Graduate next year, we know the work is just beginning. When students have a clear sense of what success looks like, they can reflect, articulate their strengths,

and take ownership of their learning. Our next steps include designing unit plans aligned to priority content standards and a graduate goal. To support this work, we are using artificial intelligence tools that help educators scaffold and differentiate instruction based on the strengths, needs, and interests of their students. Inclusionary practices once felt overwhelming, especially across a full TTK-12 system. Now with the help of AI, our educators have more support to plan for every student in a meaningful way.

As we prioritize instructional design around what we value most, we send a clear message that every learner belongs and contributes to our shared vision of success. As we lead for inclusion, I invite us to move forward grounded in intention, shaped by perspective, and focused on student agency.



Alicen Gaytley was recently named a recipient of the 2025 AASA Women in School Leadership Award.



JUNE REMINDERS

Connect with Us

Be sure to follow us on [Linkedin](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#) for information on upcoming conferences and workshops, legislative news and updates, and school news.

Update Your Profile

If you haven't already, please help us keep our membership directory up to date by taking a moment to upload your photo to your WASA member profile page. Contact Heather Chard at hchard@wasa-oly.org if you have questions or need assistance.

MEETING THE CANDIDATES

2025-26 PRESIDENT-ELECT



Thaynan Knowlton

**Superintendent
Clarkston SD**



Tabatha Mires

**Superintendent
Manson SD**

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Superintendent | Clarkston SD (2019–Present)
- Superintendent | Kettle Falls SD (2013–19)
- Principal | Goldendale Primary School Principal (2004–13)
- Director of Assessment, Curriculum, and Instruction | Goldendale SD (2001–04)
- Regional School Improvement/Assessment Trainer | ESD 105 (1998–2001)
- School Psychologist | Goldendale SD (1996–2003)
- Teacher | Family Skills Program (1999–2004)
- Presenter/Teacher | Columbia Gorge Community College (1998–2001)

EDUCATION

- Ed.D. Educational Leadership | WSU
- Superintendent's Certificate | WSU
- Principal's Certificate | Heritage University
- Program Admin. Certificate | Heritage University
- ESA Certificate (School Psych) | EWU
- M.S. Clinical Psychology | EWU
- B.A. English/Psychology | BYU

WASA SERVICE

- ESD 123 Regional President
- ESD 123 SAC Superintendent Component Representative
- ESD 101 Leadership Steering Committee

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & RECOGNITION

- Tri-State Memorial Hospital Foundation Board member
- Rotary International member
- Providence Rural Committee Board member
- Kettle Falls Downtown Association Vice President
- Paula Gmelch Scholarship in Educational Leadership Award
- George B. Brain Administrative Leadership Award
- Washington State Leadership Academy graduate
- Presented dissertation research on trustworthy leadership in Seattle, Washington

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Superintendent | Manson SD (2023–Present)
- Superintendent/K–6 Principal | Palisades SD (2021–23)
- Superintendent | Waterville SD (2018–21)
- Principal | Waterville Elementary School (2015–16)
- CTE Director | Waterville SD (2015–17)
- Principal | Waterville Jr/Sr High School (2012–21)
- Dean of Students | Waterville SD (2011–12)
- Jr/Sr High Teacher | Waterville SD (1995–2012)

EDUCATION

- Superintendent Credential | WSU
- Principal Certification | Heritage University
- Master of Education | Lesley University
- Bachelor of Education | EWU

WASA SERVICE

- WASA Isolation and Restraint Focus Group
- WASA Legislation and Finance Committee
- WASA Region 171 Vice President and President
- WASA Small School Component Chair
- WASA Superintendent Mentor
- WASA Small School Conference Presenter
- WASA/AWSP Summer Conference Presenter
- NAN National Advocacy Network Washington State

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & RECOGNITION

- Rural Alliance Board Member
- WASA Student Leadership Achievement Award
- WASA Award of Merit
- Rural Education Center Member
- AASA Member
- Leader in Me Lighthouse School Administrator
- Gates Grant School Reinvention Steering Committee
- AWSP Principal Mentor
- Manson Booster Club Member
- Waterville Shocker Booster Club Member
- Together For Drug Free Youth Advisory Board
- National Board Certification Social Studies
- ESA Special Education Advisory Committee
- NCESD Superintendent Advisory Committee
- Leader in Me National Symposium School Presenter
- WIAA Superintendent Advisory Committee Member

UNITING IN ONE VOICE

2026 Legislative Session

On April 27, legislators closed the 2025 Legislative Session, a 105-day “long” budget session. As discussed below, the outcomes for K–12 education included a few positives, a bunch of missed opportunities, and a handful of major disappointments. WASA, in partnership with the Association of Educational Service Districts, led a coalition of education associations in supporting the “Big Three”—ample funding of Special Education, Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), and Pupil Transportation—which also ended with a mixed bag.

Coming into session, we were riding a wave of optimism, following eight months of advocacy of basic education, in concert with AESD, Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA), Washington Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), Washington School Personnel Association (WSPA), Alliance of Educational Associations (AEA)—which represents two associations: Washington Association of Maintenance and Operations Administrators (WAMOA) and Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA)—Rural Education Center (REC), Washington Association of Career and Technical Administrators (WACTA), and Washington State Parent Teacher Association (WSPTA). Our respective members met with legislators throughout the summer and fall and garnered much support. Not all legislators agreed with our stance; however, none of them could legitimately claim they did not understand school district needs.

Leaders in all four political caucuses included K–12 on their list of priorities. In a show of support, legislation was introduced in both houses to advance our priorities; however, it quickly became apparent we had strong support in the Senate and a distinct lack of support in the House. Senate Committees quickly heard and moved our legislation, while the House stalled. Eventually, the House moved on our issues, but pared down our requests. As an example, the House’s MSOC bill (which we helped draft), would have provided a substantial increase in per pupil allocations of almost 23 percent (an increase of almost \$400 per pupil). When the bill reached the House Floor, MSOC increases accounted for about \$5 per pupil—and the bill they eventually passed provided NO increase. The scenario was similar with our Special Education bill.

As the session began to wind down, negotiators from both houses met behind closed doors to negotiate a final budget. When the final 2025–27 Operating Budget was released and ultimately adopted, K–12 Policy Level (discretionary) funding totaled about \$380 million. For the Big Three, special education increased by about \$300 million, supporting the elimination of the 16 percent enrollment cap, increases in excess cost multipliers, and reductions in the Safety

Net threshold. This is a significant—and appreciated—increase; however, it falls well-short of the \$1.1 billion gap between school district expenditures and state funding. MSOC investments provided approximately \$40 per student. Again, this will help districts and is appreciated; however, the modest investment of \$80 million barely makes a dent in the current \$1.2 billion in underfunding. Pupil Transportation received some attention in the Senate, but in the end, no changes in policy were made and no additional funding was provided.

Given the Legislature’s action—or more accurately their lack of positive action—WASA’s Legislation & Finance Committee recommended the Association reaffirm our support for the Big Three in 2026. At the end of May, WASA’s Board of Directors agreed and adopted the 2026 Legislative Platform, which maintains the focus of WASA’s 2025 Platform. The [2026 Legislative Platform](#) continues to emphasize three specific budget issues: Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), Special Education, and Pupil Transportation. Why did we focus on these issues in 2025? First, achieving significant funding for these programs will positively impact ALL 295 school districts—whether they be big or small, east or west, urban or rural, rich or poor. Second, each of the issues are Basic Education programs which are constitutionally required to be fully funded; however, we have documented evidence that each are woefully underfunded.

*We strongly encourage
you to stay engaged
and continue to build
relationships with legislators.*

The reasons for our focus in 2025 continue in 2026. In addition, the Legislature clearly failed to fulfill our requests—which are really school districts’ NEEDS—so reiterating the same focus maintains important consistency. Aligning school administrators and other education stakeholders to focus on a limited set of issues sent a powerful message to legislators last session and continuing the same focus will help us to maintain our coalition. And last year we built a tremendous amount of momentum; we are in this for the “long haul” and continuing to focus on the Big Three will allow us to build on that momentum.

Looking toward long-term financial stability for K–12 education, a fourth priority is also elevated by the 2026 Platform. The new plank urges the Legislature to establish a formal K–12 Ample and Equitable Finance System Workgroup to examine structural flaws and inequities in how education is funded. Discussion about overhauling K–12 funding continues to grow and school administrators

need to be at the table—if not leading the conversation.

Understanding there are multiple other education issues we have been advocating for that remain unresolved, the L&F Committee recommended and the Board adopted a set of what we call [Legislative Priorities](#) (page two of the document). This second set of issues clearly notes school administrators will focus their advocacy efforts in the 2026 Legislative Session on the ample funding of basic education; however, school administrators have ongoing concerns about Washington’s K–12 funding structure that must be addressed. In addition to the priority issues from 2025 (Updating Staff Allocations, Modifying Regionalization/Experience Factor, Reforming Levies and Local Effort Assistance, and Supporting Capital Facilities), we have added Full Funding of Substitute Costs.

There were many disappointments in the 2025 Session—and many educators are rightly frustrated. Many of you want to throw your hands up and say, “What’s the point?” or “Is it worth it?” Please understand that your advocacy—contact with legislators, public testimony, signing in on priority legislation—DID have an impact. Legislators provided modest investments (clearly not enough) to support K–12; however, without the consistent and insistent engagement by school administrators and other educators, we likely would not have even seen what little legislators did provide.

We strongly encourage you to stay engaged and continue to build relationships with legislators. WASA will continue to provide you tools and resources to help your advocacy efforts, such as the school funding website (www.waschoolfunding.org) to assist you in communicating our message with the public and our [Tool Kit](#), complete with key messages, talking points, issue briefings, fiscal data, and other resources to help us speak with one voice. We are already in-process of updating and overhauling those two resources to assist in your advocacy efforts. Be on the lookout for new and updated resources later this summer.

Finally, there are simply too many issues—budget and policy—addressed by this Legislature to discuss here. For comprehensive details of the 2025–27 Operating and Capital Budgets, as well as a full examination of the many education-related bills that were acted upon this past session, we encourage you to review WASA’s forthcoming End of Session Report.



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

WASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



WASA Board Members during the June 2025 Spokane meeting.

BOARD

President: Bob Maxwell, Pullman
President-elect: Shaun Carey, Enumclaw
Past President: Mike Villarreal, Hoquiam
Secretary: Dana Rosenbach, North Mason
Treasurer: John Sander, Franklin Pierce

Region 101: Jake Dingman, Oakesdale
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: Rodriguez Broadnax, Grand Coulee Dam

WASA's Newly-Elected Board Members

COMPONENTS

BPAC
 Jill Pratt, Rochester (Chair)
 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
 Miriam Mickelson (Chair)
 Robert Elizondo, Touchet (Chair-elect)
 Mary Templeton, Lake Stevens (Past Chair)

REGION PRESIDENTS

Region 101: Jake Dingman, Oakesdale
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: Rodriguez Brodnax, Grand Coulee Dam



Region 101 Representative
 Jake Dingman, Oakesdale



Region 114 Representative
 Rachel Davenport, North Kitsap



Region 123 Representative
 Pete Peterson, Kiona-Benton City



Region 111 Representative
 Kathi Weight, Steilacoom Historical



Region 112 Representative
 Steve Marshall, Hockinson



IPAC Component Chair-elect
 Aliecen Gaytley, Quincy



BPAC Component Chair-elect
 Monique Dugaw, ESD 112



Principal Chair-elect
 Chelssi Hanger, Morton



Superintendent Chair-elect
 Ron Banner, Clover Park

A CONVERSATION WITH JOEL AUNE: His Reflections on 42 Years in Education

Editor's Note:

As Joel Aune prepares to retire as Executive Director of WASA, we sat down with him to reflect on his 42-year career in public education—including the past seven years at WASA. His deep commitment to equity, excellence, and the power of relationships has left an indelible mark on WASA and Washington's educational landscape.

Q: Joel, as you prepare to step away from your role as Executive Director, how are you feeling?

I am filled with gratitude. My time at WASA has been among the most rewarding of my career. I've had the honor of working alongside and supporting the best and brightest minds in public education—good and decent people who show up to work every day with a singular purpose: serving kids. What a privilege it has been. During the past seven years, I believe we've made WASA better. And there is no doubt Jeff Snell will do the same as he comes on board as the next executive director here. There's a sense of peace that comes with knowing it's the right time to step aside, but of course, it's bittersweet. I'll deeply miss the people and the daily connection we share in educating the 1.1 million students here in Washington state.

Q: Looking back over your 42 years in education, what moments stand out most to you?

Relationships. Whether in the classroom, as a principal and superintendent, or at WASA, people have always been the throughline. Specific highlights include helping develop leaders in small, rural districts, leading districts through periods of transformational change, and helping



elevate WASA's visibility and impact. I'll never forget how our members led during the pandemic. It was leadership at its very best—resilient, compassionate, and courageous. I am so proud of our members. They were spectacular.

Q: How has public education evolved over the course of your career?

The changes have been profound. Over the past four decades, we've seen a shift from a locally driven system to one shaped increasingly by state and federal policy. Expectations have intensified, as has the scrutiny placed on schools and school leaders. We've also seen an increased emphasis on equity, inclusion, and social-emotional learning—topics once on the periphery are now central to our work. Technology has opened doors and presented new challenges. What's remained constant, though, is the incredible dedication of educators

and the unwavering belief in the power of public education to change lives. That enduring commitment continues to inspire me.

Q: What have been your proudest accomplishments during your time at WASA?

I'm proud of how we've positioned WASA to be a forward-thinking, mission-driven organization. I am proud that we are always chasing excellence—constantly looking for better ways of doing things. We've strengthened member services, expanded professional learning, elevated equity as a core value, and helped school leaders navigate increasingly complex challenges. I'm especially proud of our legislative advocacy efforts. WASA members have successfully influenced statewide policy to the benefit of public education. The launch of strategic initiatives like *WASAbotAI*, and the cultivation of leadership pipelines through mentorship and support can be a source of pride for the WASA team. But most of all, I'm proud of the relationship-based culture



we've cultivated, both internally and among the WASA membership—one of respect, collaboration, and shared purpose. I believe that has helped members feel a stronger connection to WASA.

Q: WASA has taken on some bold work under your leadership, particularly in equity and innovation. How did you guide that evolution?



A CONVERSATION WITH JOEL AUNE: His Reflections on 42 Years in Education



I've always said that at WASA, we must constantly endeavor to “see around the corner”. This mindset is key to WASA’s effectiveness in supporting our members to be innovative, forward thinking, dynamic leaders. Our members have always been our north star. We constantly asked ourselves, “What do school leaders need today, and what will they need tomorrow?” Equity emerged as both a challenge and a commitment. So, we leaned into it—intentionally. Likewise, with innovation, especially around artificial intelligence, we saw an opportunity for WASA to lead and not just react. My role was to create space for courageous conversations and make sure our actions always align with the values and mission of the association.

Q: What advice would you offer school leaders trying to sustain themselves in today’s complex environment?

School leadership has never been more complex and difficult than it is right now. The challenges are enormously difficult, and the pressure is intense. First, find joy in the work. Even on the darkest days, there is joy occurring in schools—get out of the office and find it. Second, consistently and frequently extend gratitude. Extending gratitude is extremely powerful—it serves to lift people up, who in turn lift others up. Extending gratitude can also be a source of fulfillment—expressing gratitude is good for one’s soul. And finally, take satisfaction in the success of others.

It doesn’t need to be about you. When the school community—administrators, staff, and parents—is hitting home runs for kids, then kids win. Kids excel and achieve their potentials. When the school community is doing its job and doing it at high levels, you’ve done your job.

Q: What advice would you give to the next generation of school leaders?

You are the stewards of public education, which is the bedrock of democracy and essential to the future of our nation—an awesome responsibility. There is no work more noble than this. Stay grounded in your purpose. Public education is about hope, opportunity, and transformation. The work is hard—but it’s worth it. Be



courageous. Build strong teams. Lead with empathy and humility. And never underestimate the impact you have on the people around you—students, staff, families. Leadership is not about having all the answers; it’s about fostering environments where others can thrive. That’s what real leadership looks like.

Q: Finally, any words you’d like to leave with the WASA community?

Thank you. It has been an honor to serve you. I’ve always believed in the collective strength of school leaders and the unique power of WASA as a community of leaders. Keep supporting one another. Lift each other up and lead with your hearts. The future is bright because our schools are in the capable and caring hands of WASA members. You’ve got this.

Joel Aune’s legacy will long be felt at WASA and across the state. We thank him for his leadership, vision, and unyielding commitment to public education. Congratulations, Joel, and enjoy a well-earned retirement!



RETIRING SUPERINTENDENTS

MARTY BREWER REFLECTS

36 Years in Public Education

After 36 years in public education and 14 as a superintendent, I leave the superintendency with profound gratitude and deep respect for those who lead school systems. The role requires resilience, adaptability, and above all else a steadfast belief in public education.

Make space at the table for all voices

Looking back, I would remind my early-career self that success in this role is less about personal expertise and more about collaborative leadership. Listen before leading. Build trust

before proposing change. Make space at the table for all voices especially those historically marginalized. Our work may be about systems, but it is always centered on people. Sustaining long-term progress means building relationships that can withstand setbacks.

I would also say: **embrace complexity.** Whether passing a \$170 million capital investment, partnering with local tribes and healthcare providers, or guiding a district through pandemic recovery, our most meaningful accomplishments are forged through challenge. Lead with transparency, humility, and purpose, and you will earn your community's trust.

One quote has continually grounded me:

"Our actions have consequences that can last long after us, entwining the present with the future in ways we cannot begin to understand. I have resolved a simple thing: I will do those things which make me happy today, and which I can also live with 10 years from now." —Greg Iles.

As I step away from this role, I remain hopeful for the future of public education.

Enjoy the ride.



Marty Brewer served as superintendent in the Pioneer School District, and most recently in Port Angeles School District.

TRACI PIERCE REFLECTS

30 Years in Education

Early in my career as a teacher, I distinctly remember walking out of school at the end of the day with my teammate Audrey, having a conversation that went like this:

She said, "I can't wait until Friday." I said, "I can't wait until spring break." She said, "I can't wait until summer!" I said, "I can't wait until retirement!!" She said, "I can't wait until..." We paused, looked at each other quizzically and together said, "We're dead??" Then we laughed so hard, both at the absurdity of wishing our lives away and at the fact that we couldn't even conceive of life in retirement.

To my colleagues in PSESD, ESD 123, and WASA: I wish you all the best, and keep fighting the good fight!

Fast forward 30 years: my retirement is just days away, and I am looking forward to life!

Work-life balance is not something I have ever been able to attain. I am constantly working and thinking about work (*cue the Rush lyrics: "I got no time for livin', yes, I'm workin' all the time!"*) I am not saying it is good, right, or healthy, but it's the nature of the job. As I look ahead to retirement, I am not going to miss the work.

But I am going to miss the people—which is weird, because on more than one occasion I may have said, "This work would be a heckuva lot easier if it weren't for all these dang people!" (*being honest: I used different words—not heck and dang*).

Here's the truth: **Our work is people.** We do hard work every day with people (*staff, parents, Board members, community members, legislators*) so people (*students*) can learn, grow, thrive, succeed and become good people. People make our work challenging, exhausting, affirming, and gratifying. I will miss them.

I have had the honor of serving as an administrator for 25 years—12 years as superintendent—in two districts in Washington State (*Lake Washington and Kennewick*), and I have many people to thank for my successful career: my amazing husband of 33 years (*Sherman*); mentors who coached and supported me (*Debbie, Cindy, and Chip*); LWSD and KSD staff, colleagues, and Board members I've been blessed to work alongside; and all of the thousands of students who kept me motivated to do the hard "people work" required to be leader in public education for all these years. Thank you all!

To my colleagues in PSESD, ESD 123, and WASA: I wish you all the best, and keep fighting the good fight! *P.S. I can't wait until June 30.*



Traci Pierce is currently serving as Superintendent of the Kennewick School District.

JO MOCCIA REFLECTS

39 Years in Public Education

After 39 years in education, with the last chapter as a superintendent in Washington State, I find myself reflecting on a career marked by both profound joy and undeniable challenge.

Serving as a superintendent has been one of the most complex and meaningful roles of my life. The challenges are real—navigating political tensions, managing shrinking budgets, and responding to the ever-evolving needs of students, staff, and community. But the rewards run deeper. This role provides a rare opportunity to shape the trajectory of public education, to remove systemic barriers, and to create the conditions for both students and staff to thrive.

To those beginning this journey, I offer this: walk to a fire. In moments of crisis or heightened emotion, our calm presence matters. When others are overwhelmed or reactive, we must model self-regulation and strength. You won't always have the perfect answer, but showing up with steadiness and authenticity can transform difficult situations into opportunities for trust and growth.

Never forget that parents and guardians love their children—deeply. Even when those relationships feel tense, remember that love is at the core. Seek connection first.

Above all, find joy in the mission. Few roles allow you to touch so many lives, to influence generations, and to support those doing the essential work of meeting students where they are and helping them grow. This has been my life's purpose—and my greatest privilege.



Jo Moccia has served in two districts as superintendent for nineteen years, the last fourteen in South Whidbey School District.

ADAPT or OBSOLETE:

WHY PUBLIC SCHOOLS MUST EMBRACE AI NOW



In an age defined by rapid technological advancement, public education faces a stark crossroads: embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI) or risk becoming irrelevant. As AI increasingly permeates every aspect of society—from healthcare to finance to logistics—it is also transforming the educational landscape. If public schools do not swiftly adopt AI technologies, they may fall dangerously behind, failing the students they are meant to prepare for the future.

The Case for AI Integration in Schools

Artificial Intelligence holds the potential to revolutionize education by offering personalized learning pathways that adapt to individual student needs. Traditional one-size-fits-all models can no longer meet the demands of a diverse student population. AI-driven systems analyze performance data to tailor lessons, identify learning gaps, and provide targeted interventions. Without these tools, public schools risk widening the achievement gap as private and charter institutions, unencumbered by bureaucracy, move quickly to personalize learning.

Furthermore, AI can dramatically reduce the administrative burden on educators, automating tasks like grading, scheduling, and even content creation. This allows teachers to refocus their energy on what matters most: engaging with students and enriching their educational experience. Schools that fail to integrate these efficiencies will not only lag in performance but also struggle to retain talented educators burned out by avoidable inefficiencies.

The Consequences of Inaction

The future of education is not a distant horizon—it is unfolding now. Schools that resist change will find themselves outpaced by institutions that harness AI for intelligent tutoring, predictive analytics, and immersive learning environments. These forward-thinking schools will better prepare students for an AI-driven workforce, where adaptability and tech fluency are prerequisites. Meanwhile, resistant public schools risk becoming outdated relics, unable to equip students with the skills they need to thrive.

Educational leaders must recognize that integrating AI is no longer optional—it is imperative. It represents not just a set of tools, but a foundational shift in how learning is delivered, understood, and measured. To ignore this shift is to gamble with the future of public education itself.

Source: [eLearning Industry](#). Written with assistance of ChatGPT.



Kim Fry is Assistant Executive Director of Learning Innovation & AI.

CONGRATS!

Honorary Award Winners

More than 1,000 school superintendents, central office administrators, principals, and aspiring leaders from across Washington state gathered in Spokane this past week to attend the 43rd annual Summer Conference hosted by the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) and the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP).

A key highlight of the conference was the 2025 WASA Honorary Awards Luncheon, where WASA's most prestigious state-level awards and scholarships were presented to outstanding educational leaders.

WASA Executive Director Joel Aune emphasized the significance of celebrating educational leadership and the impact of public school administrators:

"Throughout the past year, our public schools have served as anchors of hope and stability—thanks to the steadfast leadership and unwavering dedication of school administrators across Washington," said Aune. "Now more than ever, it is vital that we celebrate and uplift the extraordinary efforts of these leaders, whose impact on students, families, and communities is both profound and enduring."

He continued, "The 2025 WASA state award recipients reflect the very best of our profession. Their exemplary leadership, service to others, and deep commitment to students are powerful illustrations of WASA's guiding principles: Leadership, Trust, and Advocacy. Through the support of our long-standing sponsors, WASA's recognition program shines a light on inspiring stories of educational leadership that are transforming public education in meaningful ways."

Those receiving WASA's prestigious state level awards this year included:

- **Mary Beth Tack, Superintendent, Kelso SD** — WASA Learning from Leaders Award
- **Dr. Erin Prince, Superintendent, Central Kitsap SD** — WASA Leadership Award
- **Dan Steele, Assistant Executive Director, WASA** — D.A. Davidson Barbara Mertens Legacy Award

- **Joel Aune, Executive Director, WASA** — Golden Gavel Award

Several regional awards and milestones were also acknowledged. For a complete list of WASA regional awards, visit the WASA website.

This year's PEMCO Robert J. Handy Most Effective Administrator Awards were presented to:

- Large District: **Dr. Ian Saltzman, Superintendent, Everett SD**
- Medium District: **Glenn Johnson, Superintendent, Cashmere SD**

The 2025 Piper Sandler Doyle E. Winter Scholarship for Administrative Leadership in Education was presented to **Richard Zimmerman, Superintendent, North Beach SD**.

The 2025 Howard M. Coble Scholarship for Under-Represented Educational Leaders was presented to **Ravinder Dhillon, Principal, Ferndale High School**.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners!



WASA Leadership Award
Erin Prince
Superintendent, Central Kitsap SD



D.A. Davidson | Barbara Mertens Award
Dan Steele
Asst. Executive Director, WASA



Golden Gavel Award
Joel Aune
Executive Director, WASA



Learning from Leaders Award
Mary Beth Tack
Superintendent, Kelso SD



Most Effective Administrator (Med)
Glenn Johnson
Superintendent, Cashmere SD



Most Effective Administrator (Large)
Dr. Ian Saltzman
Superintendent, Everett SD



Doyle E. Winter Scholarship
Richard Zimmerman
Superintendent, North Beach SD



Howard M. Coble Scholarship
Ravinder Dhillon
Principal, Ferndale HS

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 40 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



KIM FRY

Assistant Executive Director, Learning Innovation and AI

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. She worked as a Resource Paraprofessional for six years in the Olympia School District.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 RECIPIENTS OF Washington State's Purple Star Awards



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

WASA
EQUITY LEADERSHIP TRUST ADVOCACY

The Purple Star Award Program was launched last year in Washington, recognizing school districts that support students and military-connected families. Sponsored by OSPI and WASA, the award celebrates districts that address the unique needs of students affected by military deployments and relocations, ensuring their educational and emotional well-being.

We recognize and commend those districts who have achieved the Purple Star designation:

- Anacortes School District
- Coupeville School District
- South Kitsap School District
- Bethel School District
- North Kitsap School District

About 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. This year we are also conducting a three-part research study on student cell

phone use in schools, complete with a policy creation toolkit that will be released in May. 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.

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 for districts not individuals. Membership includes all the administrators in the District. Access to the Members Only page portion of our website will be provided to any administrator designated by their superintendent. The cost of membership is 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 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

NEW THIS YEAR:

Updated Website and CBA Index

To assist ERNN members in preparing for bargaining, ERNN has updated our website to include a new *Resource Center* and a *CBA Index*, which allows members to sort WA school districts by FTE/ESD/County, identify the comparables that you want, and then get one click access to each district's website where they post the current version of their CBAs.

The new website also includes dozens of resources on a wide variety of bargaining related topics, including downloadable forms and templates to support you and your bargaining team. Visit the new website at www.ernn.com.

If your district is not yet an ERNN 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.

National Superintendent of the Year ®

WASHINGTON
SUPERINTENDENT
of the
YEAR 2025



RON BANNER
CLOVER PARK SD



Nominations and applications for the 2026 National Superintendent of the Year are now open. This program is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents. It is not a recognition of service at retirement or a program to reward current state or national leaders. Each candidate for the [National Superintendent of the Year Award®](#) must first be named by their state association as the State Superintendent of the Year.

Each State Superintendent of the Year (SOY) is judged on the following criteria:

- **Leadership for Learning**—creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- **Communication**—strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- **Professionalism**—constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- **Community Involvement**—active participation in local community activities and understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

The deadline to apply for the 2026 Washington Superintendent of the Year is October 1, 2025. Shortly after October 1, WASA will convene a panel of superintendents to review and score the applications to determine our Superintendent of the Year for 2026.

The selected candidate for Washington State will advance to AASA to be considered for the National Superintendent of the Year. AASA will announce the 2026 National Superintendent of the Year at the AASA National Conference on Education, February 12-14, in Nashville. For questions about Washington's SOY process, contact [Dominique Wilson](#).

THANK YOU, DIAMOND SPONSORS!

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



A MESSAGE FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

The Importance of WASA Membership

“The reason you matter is the person you stand for.” These words, spoken by Maryland Governor Wes Moore, have stayed with me. They echo a truth that guides my head and my heart—the profound responsibility, accountability, and opportunity inherent in the role of Superintendent. It is a calling to ensure that every student graduates equipped to pursue the widest range of postsecondary paths possible—career, education, and life. It is about dignifying every student—one student at a time.

This calling is not mine alone. I invite others—educators, leaders, families, and community members—to share in this commitment. The work is challenging. Some obstacles we see coming; others catch us off guard. But in those moments, it is our shared beliefs and values that center us, guiding us forward.

When the path becomes blurred, take a moment to reflect upon not only what you stand for—but who you stand for. Your students. Their families. Our community. Let that be your anchor.

Revisit your values often. Speak them with clarity. Live them with consistency. Lead with grace, humility, gratitude, and integrity—modeling the very qualities we wish for others to emulate.

To my younger self, and to anyone on this journey: Find joy in each step along the way. Let gratitude be your rhythm. And most of all, invite others to stand with you—in support of those we stand for.



Tom Venable has served for twelve years as superintendent at Methow Valley School District.

WASA's Member Support & Professional Assistance Program



As the Assistant Executive Director of WASA, I'm committed to ensuring that our members have access to the support they need. The WASA Professional Assistance Program

is one of our most vital resources, designed to provide our members with confidential and personalized assistance in any situation related to their roles as educational leaders.

Through the program, active WASA members are eligible for a variety of

services aimed at supporting your professional and personal well-being. Whether you need advice and legal counsel, contract reviews, ethics assistance, or mentorship, WASA is here for you.

Advice and Legal Counsel

If you're facing a problem or potential issue related to your professional assignment, our experienced executive staff are ready to assist. We can arrange confidential help to ensure you receive the guidance you need. Before reaching out to an attorney, remember to contact WASA first. Our program covers initial legal counsel up to \$750,

with further support available through our Professional Standards and Ethics Committee. Ethics Assistance.

Contract Review

Negotiating or updating your employment contract? WASA offers thorough contract evaluations and recommendations to support you in securing the best possible terms.

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

New WASA Members

We've welcomed 14 new members since March 2025.

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.

Kevin K. Rupprecht, Clover Park
Jason Aillaud, Edmonds
Lance Hansen, Kennewick
Avery R. E. Batts, Kent
Andrew Upchurch, Muckleshoot

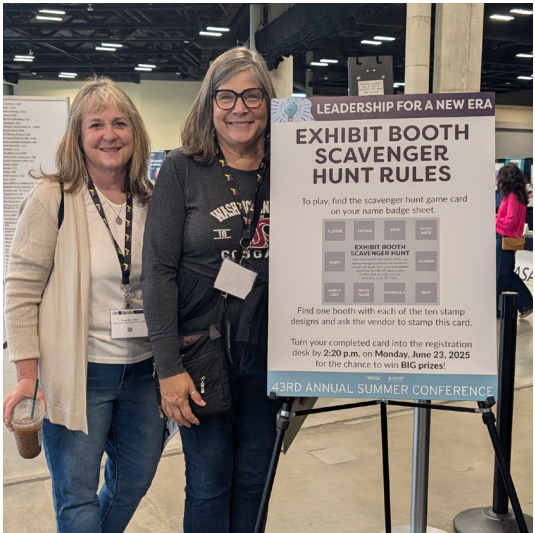
Emily White, Muckleshoot
Janice Cockerham-Twigg, Muckleshoot
Jason Russell, Muckleshoot
Krista Yi, Muckleshoot
Laura Batcheller, Olympic ESD 114



Lee Collyer, Olympic ESD 114
Abigail Westbrook, Sumner-Bonney Lake
Douglas Rogers, Sunnyside
Tom Brandt, Union Gap

43RD ANNUAL WASA/AWSP Summer Conference

Thank you to everyone who attended the 43rd Annual WASA/AWSP Summer Conference! Keynote speakers included Dr. Taryn Stejskal, Sarita Maybin, and Jeff Butler, who all brought their own input and excitement to the crowd! But we couldn't have done it without the presenters who hosted our plethora of concurrent sessions, nor without the many exhibitors and sponsors who helped make our conference what it was — and provided great prizes! Lastly, thank you to all of the team members who worked tirelessly to create a smooth-running



WASA BOOK CORNER

Book Review:
Never Lead Alone: 10 Shifts From Leadership to Teamship, By Keith Ferrazzi with Paul Hill.

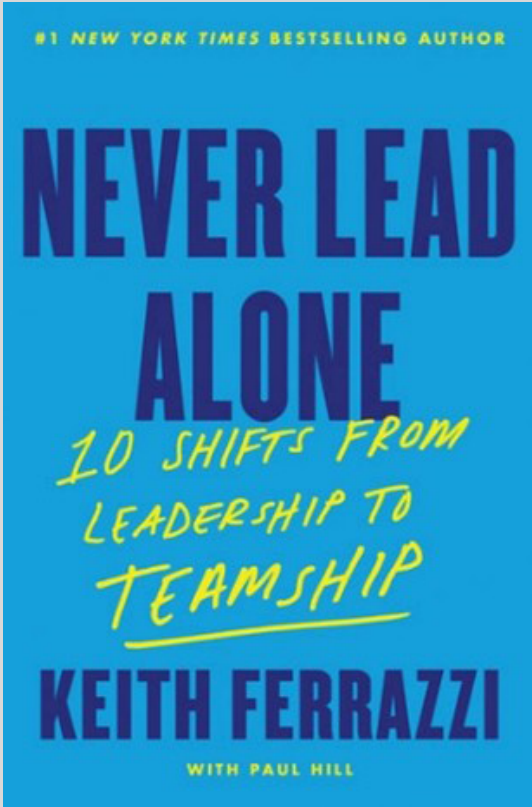


In *Never Lead Alone*, Keith Ferrazzi—leadership thought leader and best-selling author—challenges the traditional model of hierarchical leadership with a powerful call to embrace co-elevation: a collaborative, team-first approach to leading in today's fast-moving world.

The book distills Ferrazzi's research and experience into 10 actionable shifts that move us from command-and-control leadership to a model supporting shared accountability, collaboration, and collective success.

Whether you're a superintendent, central office leader, or principal, *Never Lead Alone* offers insights that align closely with the challenges and opportunities of educational leadership. From building trust-based teams to modeling vulnerability, Ferrazzi emphasizes that the best leaders are those who never go it alone—but instead create environments where everyone leads together.

Accessible and filled with real-world examples, this book is a must-read for educational leaders looking to build stronger teams.





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Shawn Batstone | Assistant Executive Director

Ryan Hickerson | PL and Membership Assistant

Beau Wilson | PL and Innovation Assistant

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Natalie Plott | Office Assistant

WASA OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

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PRESIDENT-ELECT

Shaun Carey, Enumclaw

PAST PRESIDENT

Mike Villarreal, Hoquiam

SECRETARY

Dana Rosenbach, North Mason

TREASURER

John Sander, Franklin Pierce



UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES!



What does HB 1296 Mean for You?
June 26, 2025 | Virtual | FREE
12 - 1 p.m.



JULY 30 – AUGUST 1 2025
WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON

MTSS Conference
July 30 – August 1, 2025 | Wenatchee
Wenatchee Convention Center



Fall Conference
October 1, 2025 | Tumwater
ESD 113

July

JULY 21-22
Incoming Superintendents Conference
ESD 113
Tumwater, WA

JULY 30-AUGUST 1
Integrated MTSS Conference
Wenatchee Convention Center

August

JULY 30-AUGUST 1
Integrated MTSS Conference
Wenatchee Convention Center

September

SEPTEMBER 17
Aspiring Superintendents Academy
Virtual
8:30 – 11 a.m.

SEPTEMBER 25
Aspiring Central Office Leadership Academy
Virtual
9 – 11 a.m.

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

