



WSSDA

direct

QUARTERLY NEWSMAGAZINE

WINTER 2020

We got this

Sage Jacobs of
Bellingham High School,
one of 22 students who
performed virtually
at the WSSDA Annual
Conference.

Students discuss how racism
insinuates itself into their school
life, *p.4*; Behind the scenes: the
all-virtual General Assembly, *p.6*;
Recap of Annual Conference, *p.7*;
Sticking to the mission: the 2020
Board of the Year winners, *p.10*.;
and more! >>>



Technology and governance might not seem a likely pairing—one being a tool and the other being a collective act. However, modern governance should both utilize available tools as well as set a direction and example for the rest of the educational enterprise. It is incumbent on school districts, and thereby their leaders, to prepare students for their future, not for the board members' pasts. That future will not be separated from technology.

Embody the Principles of a Learning Organization

Students today learn academic core subjects, but they need more than those to seamlessly integrate into the workforce. Education has long moved past simply the 3 Rs, expanding to include what many have dubbed “The 4 Cs”:

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration
- Creativity

The entire organization can use the 4 Cs as their respective organizing concept. Embedding these into the organization requires boards to model the same behavior in their work, applying the 4 Cs to 1) strategic planning, 2) accountability and data protocols 3) process improvements and 4) leading as a learning community.

Embrace Transparency and Accessibility

The question, “Who owns the schools?” might generate a multitude of answers. These range from taxpayers to parents to educators to students. These groups all have vested interests in the district. Modern governance requires we meet the needs of all constituents and embrace inclusivity. Transparency is critical, and stakeholders have an expectation of access. District leaders can create a culture of openness, which fosters trust and faith in the district and its employees, by using technological solutions that provide transparency. Board technology also broadens accessibility for all, regardless of ability, income or status.

Incorporate Innovation through Change

School directors serve as the examples and the figureheads for the district. If a district aspires to be a flagship learning community attracting the best applicants, launching programs that are models of innovation, it will only be as good as the board is. A modern governance board embraces its role, taking seriously the opportunity to create a district culture that strives for excellence, views mistakes as learning opportunities and sees of the value in constant improvement. A board using technology to its fullest has an opportunity to set the tone for the district and create a culture of learning and forward-thinking.

Questions to Consider as a Modern Governance Board

- Have we set a vision for our district, basing our decisions on movement toward that vision?
- Have we adopted a strategic plan for the district?
- Are we using the collective tools, processes and methodologies that enable that enable us to move toward our goals?
- Are we using data to drive our decisions? Is the data available to everyone?
- Have we embraced the team approach, asking questions in a way that invites openness with a focus on improvement?
- Do we spend time on process improvements and discussions of substance, avoiding politics?
- Are we communicating with key audiences about issues facing the district?

Creating the right culture requires having the right tools and demonstrating modern governance best practices to the community. After all, community members are future board members. How a board sets the culture determines the future board.

If your school district would like to learn more about how the leading board management platform for K12 education can help your board embrace modern governance through technology, contact your BoardDocs representative or visit learn.diligent.com/WSSDA to request a demo.



About the Author

Diana Baker Freeman is a governance specialist with an MS in Education Leadership and is a certified Master Trustee through Leadership TASB. As a former educator, board member, and board development consultant, Diana focuses on the role of modern governance in improving educational outcomes for all students.



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Is there a subject you feel strongly about that you'd like to raise with fellow school directors? Then submit a "passion piece" in which you share why the issue is important to you, what you've learned that others may not know, and explain how this issue has informed your work as a school director.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

If your district has experienced success (or failure) that would be instructive to others, let us know so we can help you tell the story!

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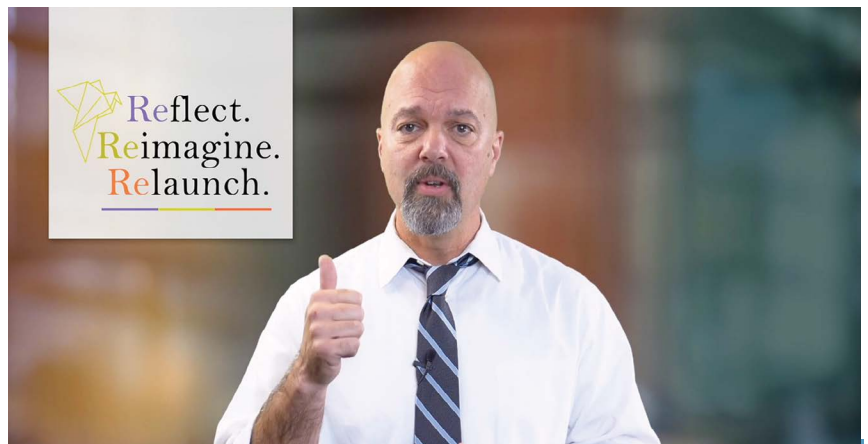
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Reflect.
Reimagine.
Relaunch.



From the Executive Director

Onward and upward

It's been a tough year. Communities are struggling, and even the nation has been challenged in ways nobody expected. But despite that, this issue of *Direct* is full of inspiring people from Annual Conference keynote speakers to students like Noel Meza, a seventh grader from Clover Park School District.

Noel won an art contest for creating an anti-hate campaign (see page 13). In describing the struggle for equal rights, he said, "even though we have solved some problems, we still face many more." Not only are those words a perfect summary for 2020, but Noel goes on to give us the unvarnished truth. He explains that "sometimes stairs are hard to climb, but if you want to keep moving forward, you have to climb them."

Every single one of you has kept on climbing. Whether it's adapting staff to new roles, packing food bags, or setting up city-wide mesh networks for increased broadband access, all of you have found new ways to help your communities and preserve public education as one of the cornerstones of our society.

In this issue of *Direct*, we celebrate innovation, effective governance, and strong advocacy. On page 7, see what everyone loved about this year's Annual Conference. Despite being virtual, the conference was as energizing and informative as ever. On page 10, see what distinguished our Boards of the Year. And on page 6, look behind the scenes of WSSDA's virtual General Assembly. This seminal WSSDA event sets the tone for the following year's legislative advocacy.

In conclusion, I hope winter break allows you to rest up for 2021. And if the going gets tough again, think of Noel and the students of your district. As Noel says, "we are the generation that can do this."

Tim Garchow

Tim Garchow, WSSDA Executive Director



Photo above: Tim Garchow presenting at the virtual 2020 WSSDA Annual Conference.

HIGHLIGHTS



p.13, OUR KIDS: Clover Park student video **#USvsHate**

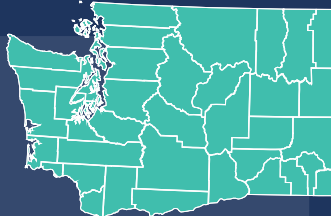


p.7, RECAPING THE 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Ready to Reopen Playbook

*No matter where meals are served, we're still doing everything we can to keep mealtime as a time for students to **relax, recharge and enjoy a sense of happiness.***



Objectives

- Identify flexible solutions for keeping kids fed
- Prioritize safety for students and associates
- Create and curate relevant resources for executing meal service models
- Continue to serve up happy and healthy!



We've worked around the clock to support our district partners and communities to reopen the 2020-2021 school campaign. In many cases, we know you will need to consider a blend of learning environments across your schools and feeding avenues for your students.

The six service model options included in Chartwells' playbook are intended to offer inspiration for your students and support district initiatives. Drawing from over **660** partners across the U.S., we have the **flexibility** and **creativity** to generate the most beneficial solutions for you.



Leadership Development –Tricia Lubach

Remember when one-to-one technology was a “long-term” goal that required a great deal of time and money to achieve? When it became the highest priority last spring, schools managed to get computers and internet access to nearly every student in the state within months, not years. What changed? School directors decided to make it happen, and it did. This year has shown that it is the will, determination and courage to make a change that enable that change to happen; not patiently waiting for the perfect moment. What else are we waiting to change until we have the right time, money and collective will to achieve? Educational justice? Equitable discipline practices? Teaching practices that are culturally and racially just? As Annual Conference keynote speaker Ijeoma Oluo noted, while we are reimagining our world, let’s create one that has racial and educational justice built in. Why wait?

Strategic Advocacy –Marissa Rathbone

2020 forced leaders to reimagine the delivery of public education, and that work continues. As policymakers consider K-12’s needs, you need to tell your stories, expressing the progress you would like to see, and sharing your district and WSSDA legislative priorities. This fall, we were fortunate to have an audience with House Education Committee leaders not once, but three times! That was a great place to tell your stories, but it’s no substitute for connecting with your local legislators. To aid with those connections, we invite you to join our monthly legislative webinars. All school directors are welcome to participate. As we greet 2021, we need all of you to be your healthiest and most joyful selves. As White Eagle of the Hopi nation recently stated, “...when the storm passes, each of you will be very important in the reconstruction of this new world.”

Policy and Legal –Abigail Westbrook

Thank you to all who attended Law Conference, offered annually in conjunction with the WSSDA Annual Conference. We’ve also just completed a school law workshop for the attorneys whose practice is school or education law and support your districts. Looking ahead, we’re happy to welcome our new Resolutions Committee members for 2021. Please join me in thanking outgoing chair, Bruce Richards, for his service. Bruce served as chair for 11 of the 12 years that he worked on the committee! And finally, we’re wrapping up the final issue of *Policy & Legal News* for 2020. Keep an eye on your inboxes for that!



From the Board President



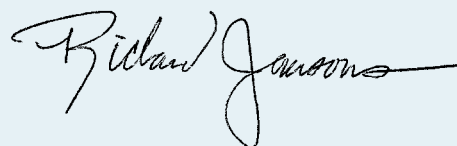
I’m privileged and humbled to assume the office of President of WSSDA for this coming year. I am blessed to be following our past president, Brenda Rogers, and will strive to continue leading in the example she set.

This is a tough time to be a school director! We’re all working to provide the best education possible for our students during this COVID pandemic while keeping staff and students safe. We’ve all heard the state revenue forecasts projecting major shortfalls for the coming biennium. We will all likely be feeling the effect of lower revenue over the next two years. These new budget concerns fall on top of lower enrollment as parents choose to keep students at home, which further decreases the revenue districts have to serve students.

However, WSSDA will be with you to help prepare you for these challenges as you continue to fight for the needs of your students. We will continue to offer and expand our world-class OnBoard training seminars. We will provide information you need through our daily eClippings news service, our *Policy & Legal News* magazine, and from our strategic advocacy team.

Our policy services staff will continue to monitor and update model policies for your districts to adopt as the state changes laws and regulations. Our WSSDA staff has a “can-do” attitude and I am confident that WSSDA will continue to provide the services you expect and need.

Finally, I want to remind each of you that you are a hero. You are each a leader in your community. This may be the most difficult and thankless time to serve as a school director. You will be criticized for your decisions because there are no easy answers for dealing with COVID or cutting budgets. If the answers were easy, they would have already been solved by your staff. But these are big problems, and this is when your community needs you most. WSSDA is here to support you, and you have the support and advice of all your fellow school directors. I know each of you will continue to fight for what’s best for our students!



Rick Jansons, WSSDA Board President

An interactive discussion

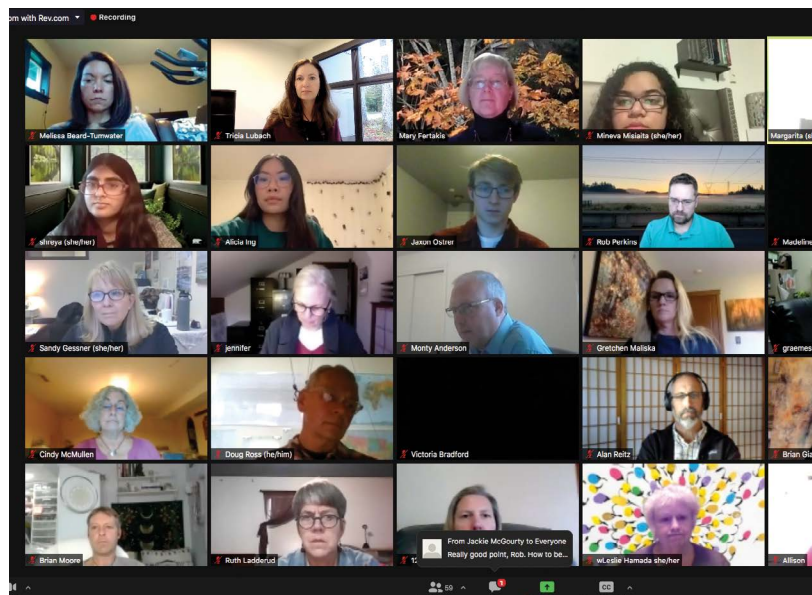
LEADING FOR EQUITY PRE-CONFERENCE

Every year, WSSDA's annual conference brings together over a thousand education leaders from across Washington, making it not only the largest K-12 education gathering in the state but WSSDA's biggest event of the year. Before the conference itself, WSSDA offers pre-conference sessions that allow for a deeper dive into topics that last half or even all day long. One of this year's popular workshops was titled "Leading for Equity."

The Leading for Equity pre-conference featured equity champions from around the state who challenged school directors to rethink, analyze, and achieve a fresh perspective with which to pave a road to success and leadership for underrepresented groups in their district.

A panel of youth leaders kicked off the program by discussing how racism insinuates itself into their school life. The students shared personal experiences, described how COVID-19 added another layer of inequities for marginalized communities, and suggested ways that white education leaders could address equity issues to remove systemic barriers for students of color.

One student from the panel, who has seen blatant racism and implicit bias in her district, asked board members to not only listen to the issues but to follow up with action.



Above: Students participating in a Q&A session panel as part of the Leading for Equity pre-conference.

"We just want it to have an impact," they said. "It's tiring having to repeat the process that includes convincing state boards, districts, schools, staff—whoever it is—that we (students of color) are worth the process of equitable change. It's exhausting being treated as a check-off on your to-do list."

CONTINUED on page 9

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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FALL 2020

Seeing the big picture

Effective boards focus on the big picture, p.14; Local leader joins national steering committee, p.10;
Hearing the represented, p.5; From strike to pandemic: a student board rep reflects, p.6; Understanding
LEA, p. 7; Being African American is..., p.16 And more! >>

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Changing of the guard

Congratulations to the newest members of WSSDA's board! We asked why they wanted to join the board and what they would say to a school director who's never engaged with WSSDA before.



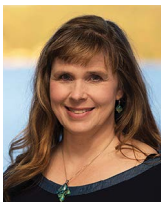
Joining the WSSDA board was the next step for me in leadership. After serving on the Resolutions and Legislative committees, and completing Leadership WSSDA, I wanted to continue to be a better leader and voice for our students. I believe in lifelong learning, and want to learn how to be a better advocate for public education. WSSDA is such a powerful platform full of information and trainings. Being a part of WSSDA makes you part of a family whose passion is kids and public education. –WSSDA Vice President, *Michelle Perry, Sunnyside*



Once the pandemic is over, we'll have a lot of damage to undo that has been inflicted on our students and our schools. WSSDA is a critically important part of that. I hope my being on the board can help accomplish that. Serving on a school board during difficult times can be a lonely and isolating experience. Look to WSSDA and your fellow members for the support, guidance and information you need to push through the challenges you face. Take every chance you can to engage with and learn from what WSSDA provides. There is no better way to grow as a school director. –Derek Sarley, *Walla Walla*



Representing DA 6 is truly an honor. My hope is to engage more members in my region and ensure the voices of all districts are heard. We must ensure the work we do benefits all students throughout the state of Washington. Being engaged with WSSDA is a great way to meet people throughout the state that have shared similar experiences and expertise and are willing to help you navigate any issues/topics that you or your local board may be dealing with. WSSDA offers amazing professional development and encourages its members to engage in continuous learning. –Julie Bocanegra, *Evergreen*



I've seen the power of collaboration among districts and the benefits it brings to students. Joining the board, I want to contribute more to that collaboration to help secure greater resources, a stronger voice for advocacy, and proactive supports that benefit all our students. Engaging with WSSDA doesn't have to be a huge endeavor. It can be as small as connecting with a director from another district or as big as chairing a WSSDA committee for 11 years! The choice is yours, but any engagement will benefit not only yourself and your district, but all the other directors and their districts because we'll have the benefit of your knowledge and perspective. –Christine Chew, *Bellevue*

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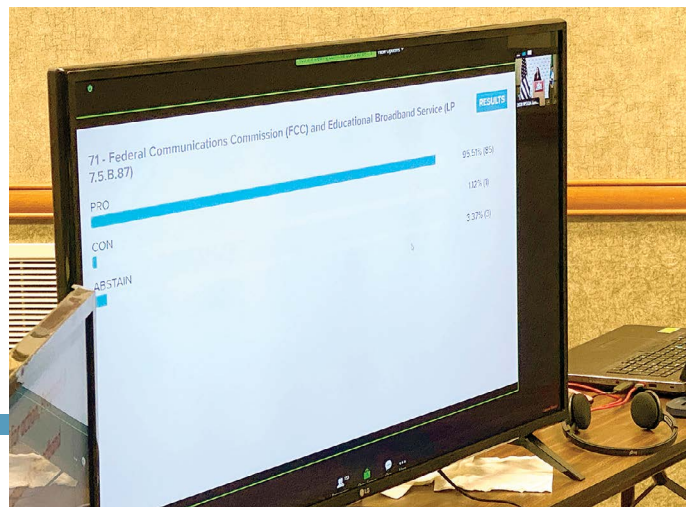
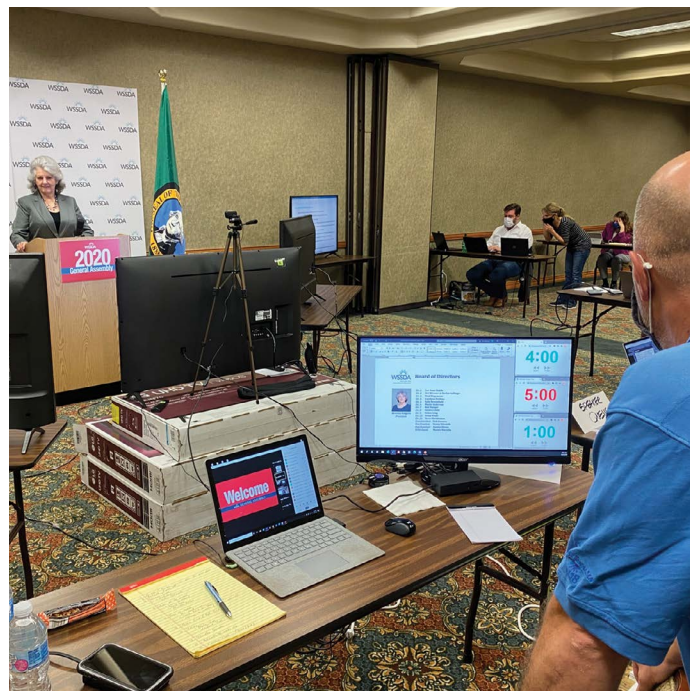
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Since 1991, our mission has been to ensure your search results in quality leadership for education excellence.

Behind the scenes:

CREATING A VIRTUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY



WSSDA's 2020 General Assembly saw a record-shattering 203 of Washington's 295 school districts register a voting delegate to participate in the democratic process of setting WSSDA's permanent and legislative positions. This event's importance is profound because the outcomes contribute to impacting the trajectory of public education in Washington state. The impact is realized because the decisions made at General Assembly define WSSDA's values and set its advocacy priorities for the following legislative session.

For the first time ever, the assembly combined two separate WSSDA events into one. Though not originally planned to be a virtual event, COVID-19 forced WSSDA to adopt an online format, which was another first. The surrounding photos show staff, the WSSDA president, and the chairs of the Resolutions and Legislative Committees broadcasting on the day of the assembly. Additional staff worked from home, responding to technology help requests.

Building upon the success of this year's event, we hope to see participation increase again next year. The more districts that participate, the more YOUR voice will be amplified in Olympia.

Learn more about General Assembly by visiting wssda.org/ga.

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We got this

When school buildings closed in March, “we got this” became the unofficial mantra for WSSDA staff. The 2020 Annual Conference is a case in point. Initial planning for the usual in-person event shifted to envisioning a hybrid model, but then conditions required a pivot to

fully virtual. Even when the opposite seemed likely, staff and their WSSDA committee and vendor partners held to that mantra and worked until the words “we got this” rang true.

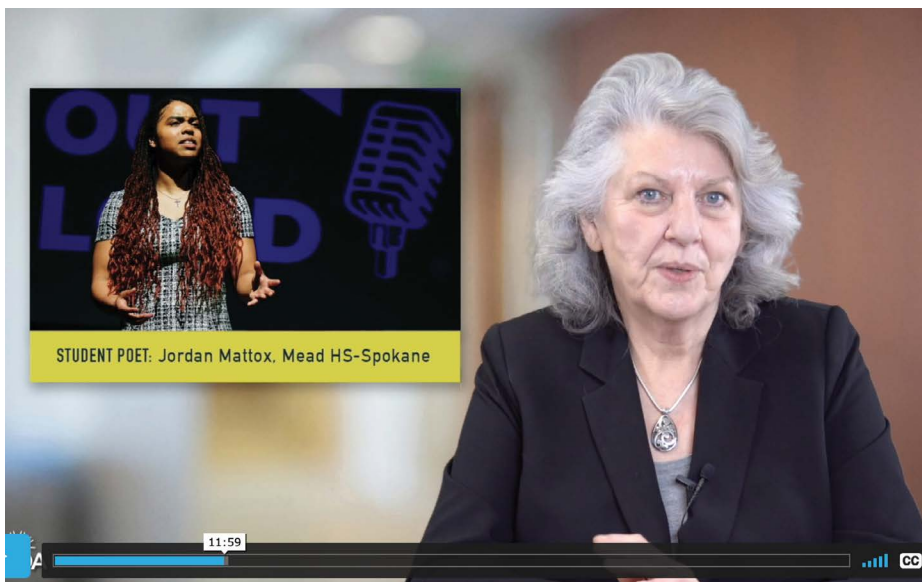
“I was a little worried how a virtual conference would turn out until I saw how well General Assembly went,” said WSSDA President Brenda Rogers. “A lot of other virtual events



I had attended were not very inspiring. But I think ours went really well, and that's what I'm hearing from everybody else.”

This year, close to 700 school board directors, education leaders, and student board representatives gathered from their various remote spaces for the first-ever virtual Annual Conference. The attendees took this year's theme to heart, entering conference prepared to reflect upon, reimagine, and relaunch their ideas of public education in Washington.

The keynote speakers also came prepared. They brought riveting stories and incisive questions to help us challenge the capabilities of our students, our system, and ourselves. Amy Campbell inspired attendees by showing, with real-world examples, that all students can



CONTINUED on page 8

reach beyond their perceived potential. She encouraged educators to create new avenues when determining a student's learning path. Mike Rayburn helped us laugh and sing along while also teaching us there is no task too big or impossible. Ijeoma Olou described the hardships of being a Black student in our education system and urged leaders to take action in identifying and disrupting racism in our education systems.

Each day of conference, the keynote speakers dropped their messages on us like rocks into the proverbial pond. Then, like ripples across the water, the breakout sessions radiated their messages throughout the fields of public education and district governance. Education leaders, legislators, business professionals, and students shared their expertise in a myriad of subject areas to foster attendees' personal and professional growth.

Equity was a large topic of discussion, with over 15 sessions relating to this essential subject. Other sectors of learning included education

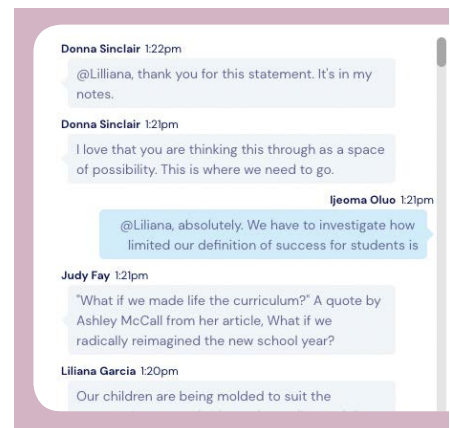
policy, funding, budgeting, board growth, the well-being of students and staff, successful leadership strategies, cybersecurity, internet access, and the upcoming legislative session.

Through interactive online chat, sessions also provided conference attendees opportunities to engage in lively discussions with presenters and other attendees.

In addition to the chatbox, attendees also connected in the conference platform's networking hub. The networking hub allowed attendees to add one another as connections, schedule meetings, engage in live video discussions, and instant message.

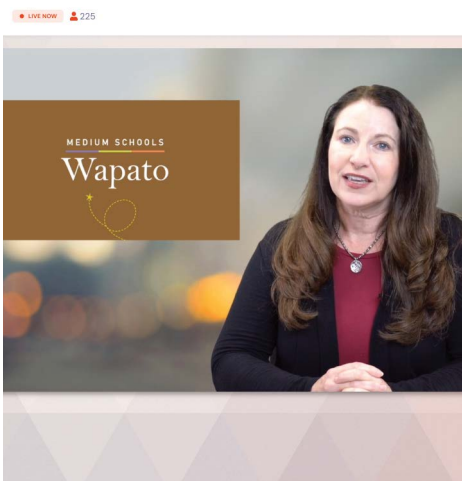
As happens every year at conference, WSSDA also welcomed new leadership and recognized the hard work of our school boards. Rick Jansons, from Richland School District, was sworn in as the WSSDA President and the 2020 Boards of the Year were announced.

Lastly, and most importantly, WSSDA would like to thank the sponsors, exhibitors,



Above: Ijeoma Oluo was able to respond directly to viewers' questions during her keynote presentation.

presenters, keynoters, performers, and of course, attendees for making our first virtual annual conference a success. WSSDA looks forward to bringing you another successful conference next year. And no matter what 2021 throws our way, we can confidently say: "We got this!"



Clockwise, left to right: Platform welcome screen; student performers, The Bellingham Showstoppers; student violinist Sage Jabobs; discussion forum screen, Boards of the Year awards ceremony.





Book review:

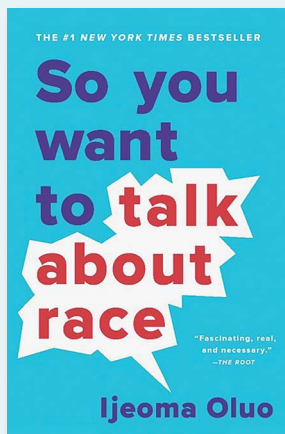
So, you want to talk about race.

Just read this book!

As school board directors and district leaders, our resolve to meet the needs of Washington's 1.1 million schoolchildren must include a commitment to end racial injustice and systemic oppression. The level of public awareness around police brutality, inequitable access, and unconscionably disparate educational outcomes has brought our responsibility into sharp relief. To look away in this moment diminishes the importance and undermines the well-being of the more than 500,000 children of color whom we have all sworn to serve.

We struggle to see progress in dismantling structural racial injustice because to do so requires a commitment to a deep understanding of its effects. It is painful. This critical and heart-rending conversation requires courage, compassion, and vulnerability in equal measure. It's hard because it hurts to know that human beings are suffering and even more so to see that we are part of a system that perpetuates this suffering.

It would be lovely (and much easier) to share in the post-racial dream that history has conveniently reduced Dr. King's message to be. Yet, as Oluo points out, when she tried to gentle her message and quiet her voice, "... a quieter, gentler voice did not bring a quieter, gentler world." A quiet, gentle voice is easy to dismiss. And the urgency with which



we must own up to our responsibility to challenge systemic oppression requires bold leadership and a raucous chorus too loud to be ignored. Imagine the possibilities if all of Washington's school board directors and district leaders dared to take on this challenge.

Ms. Oluo's passion is evident throughout her writing, but passion is not all that she offers. In *So you want to talk about race*, she offers critical context to build an understanding of the effects of racism on people of color and on our communities at large. Oluo provides practical approaches to examine our role in perpetuating systemic racism and articulates how we can listen and learn from the experiences of people of color and use our privilege to take action. Through Ms. Oluo's voice, we can learn to counter-balance our discomfort with the determination to do better together.

"The system of white supremacy does not care about your intentions, it does not care if you do or do not hold hatred for people of color in your heart—it only cares that you participate in the system" (Oluo, 2017).

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Mari has served for more than 20 years on the Lake Stevens School District Board of Directors, and served as president of the Washington State School Directors' Association. She received her M.A. in Policy Studies from UW Bothell, and currently works with the Department of Children, Youth and Families on early learning transitions.



EQUITY IN ACTION continued from page 4

Next up were facilitators Angelica Alvarez, Highline Public Schools Board President and Puget Sound ESD Student, Family & Community Engagement Manager and Mary Fertakis of the Washington State Board of Education and a WSSDA Leadership Consultant. The two broke down racial equity policy development, its impact on existing board policies, and how to take action after adopting a racial equity policy.

Fertakis says due to the longstanding normality of the current public education system, adopting a race and equity policy is only one step toward dismantling systemic barriers.

"The system was designed originally to support the education needs of white male, affluent, able-bodied children," Fertakis said. "The fact that those beliefs and attitudes have been here so long and embedded in all of our policies, it's going to take intentional work to do that."

Alvarez echoed Fertakis, saying equity work is extensive but could, and should be, a support system for others.

"It takes a village to raise all of our kids," Alvarez said. "This includes reaching out to your board members of color and finding out what they need, how you can be supportive and working together to make this happen."

Next up was another panel discussion featuring board members of color from across the state. Luckisha Phillips of Federal Way, Melissa Beard of Tumwater, Ron Mabry from Kennewick, and Stanley Holland from Orting discussed how school districts can attract, support and empower administrators of color and how to practice equity and inclusion in board meetings.

Beard says equity work requires two important steps: representation and inclusion.

"Be intentional about including new voices and perspectives," Beard said. "It is not enough to have people at the table if you have not done the work to intentionally include them in the conversation."

The recording of this and all other 2020 Annual Conference sessions are available to registrants through July 2021. See wssda.org/AC.

Sticking to the mission

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) has a clear mission: to empower its members with tools, knowledge, and skills to govern with excellence and advocate for public education. Every elected public school board member in the state is, by default, a WSSDA "member."

Each summer, those members are invited to apply to WSSDA's Boards of Distinction program. To do so, they must gather their school board team to inspect their work from the past year and identify their successes in closing opportunity gaps and fulfilling at least one aspect of the Washington School Board Standards.

The standards exist to give board members knowledge of how an effective school board operates. The Boards of Distinction program is a tool for encouraging boards to absorb that knowledge and to emulate the standards through their own governance practices.

This year, 25 school districts wrote essays and provided data and other evidence to show that their work reflected the Washington School Board Standards. Each of those districts were recognized as a Board of Distinction, but three were singled out for special recognition as Boards of the Year. Those three were particularly successful at showing a correlation between data, board decisions, and positive outcomes for students.

All of this is to say that the Boards of Distinction program is not simply a pat on the back; it's WSSDA sticking to its mission. Encouraging boards to reflect on their work and evaluate it through the lens of the standards benefits students and ultimately the whole state. Please join us in congratulating this year's Boards of the Year!

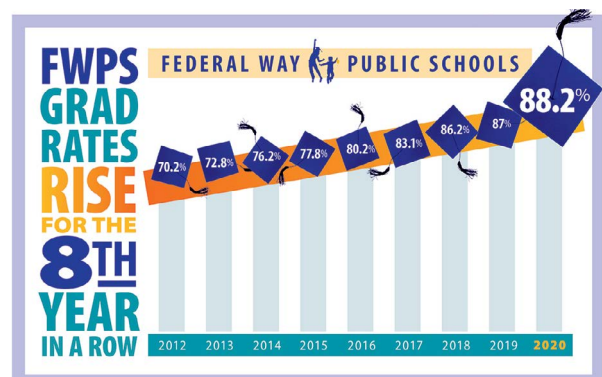


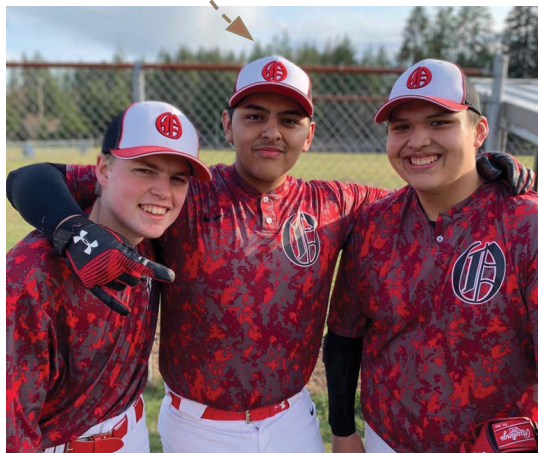
Federal Way

Serving a highly diverse student body of about 23,000 students, the Federal Way board has overseen impressive rates of increasing on-time graduation from 78% to 87% in the last five years. During that time, the graduation gaps have narrowed between sub-groups, including race.

The board's strong sponsorship of a data-informed strategic plan focused on equity, and continuous improvement has closed other opportunity gaps as well. Each school implemented strategies that have been successful in reducing disproportionality in student discipline and increased English Language Learner exit rates. The specific goals and performance measures in the strategic plan also led to increased opportunities for Federal Way graduates. For three straight years, district students have completed federal college financial aid applications at higher rates than state averages. During the same period, college enrollment rates have also increased.

The Federal Way board's commitment to equity is evident in its strategic plan, in which every goal has an equity component focused on closing gaps. The board has funded extensive equity training for its staff at all levels and engages in significant professional development itself.





Oakville

Judges were impressed with the school board's focus on providing the conditions for students to be successful, including providing expanded opportunities for personalized plans and access to expanded Career & Technical Ed courses. Oakville School District, located southwest of Olympia, has about 270 students, almost a quarter of whom are Native American. More than 80% of students were considered low-income last school year.

Based on what they heard from students and the community, the board sponsored expansion at the secondary level from three CTE courses to seven, adding coursework and programs in the fields that interested students. These included agriculture, visual and digital arts, finance, environmental science, and early childhood education, in addition to the carpentry and pre-engineering pathways also available to students. Judges were impressed with Oakville's commitment to increasing students' opportunities to expand their horizons and pursue their passions within the small district.



Wapato

Located in central Washington, Wapato is another school district with a large Native American student population of about 20%. Another 73% of their 3,400 students are Hispanic or Latino, and almost half of all students are English Learners. The Wapato School board demonstrated a tremendous focus on strengthening its relationships with the Yakama Indian Tribe and closing the achievement gaps of their Native American students.

With an intentional plan from the board, the district included the Yakama Nation Tribal Council Liaison on the decision-making team. They added courses teaching the local Native American language to their middle and high schools and, through a multi-year partnership, added mental health counselors from the Yakima Nation Behavioral Health Services at their schools.

Additionally, the Wapato board sponsored a new partnership with the University of Oregon Teacher Preparation Program with an emphasis on recruiting Native American teacher candidates. Their data backs up their efforts, with the gap between Native, Hispanic, and white students narrowing or being eliminated in multiple categories, including graduation rates.



Notable...

Each year, the Annual Conference keynote speakers inspire us to action in ways that resonate throughout the following year. Drawing from the conference theme of “Reflect, Reimagine, Relaunch,” the speakers challenged us to reimagine our possibilities. Amy Campbell prompted us to think of inclusion in classrooms as foundational to building a healthy community. Mike Rayburn urged us to ask “what if...?” as a way to tackle seemingly impossible tasks. Ijeoma Oluo showed us that equity issues impact ALL students and urged us to rescue our students’ childhood experience from the harm of racial inequality. In other words, we have our work cut out for us, but also some ideas to help us move forward. >>>

Social-emotional learning is the heart of education. It’s what brings every kid back to our classrooms every day. Social-emotional learning is where kids learn about themselves, how to process their feelings, about empathy. They learn about each other. Their activities build relationships. This is the way we build friendships. This is the way we allow our students to see the humanity in each other.

When we focus on building really strong inclusive communities, we’re helping students see the potential in each other; they see their role. So, as our students move out of our public schools, they’re going to build stronger and more inclusive communities where everybody has a place.

The most basic human cognitive function is to ask questions. My favorite is, “what if”. Every time you ask that question you open up opportunity and possibility. “What if we could do that? What would it look like? How would it work? What if you absolutely HAD to do this, what would you have to do to make it happen?”

**What’s holding you back?
Right now, what’s in your way—
personally, professionally?
When you ask and answer this
question, the solutions you
come up with are yours. They
are a product of your ability and
experiences: no one else would
have come up with them. This is
your opportunity as a leaders to
affect positive change.**

When we don’t have something we need to reach a goal, what we get is a “problem” to give us that ability; that’s how we need to reframe it. How stumbling blocks turn into stepping stones is a function of “what if?”

MIKE RAYBURN

Our children are only children once. Youth is supposed to be a time of magic, a time of adventure, a time to make mistakes and learn and grow. So often our children come out of the education system hardened and hurt. No matter what we do to improve racial equity in our society, we cannot give our children their childhood back. Once it’s gone, it’s gone. Whatever your nervousness about talking about race or pushing for change, you have to find a way to push through that. Our children deserve better.



AMY CAMPBELL

I want to shine a light on how inclusion is not a special education issue but rather a commitment to community that we can all take on and it’s that much easier when we get leadership who shines that light on this is a value.

I talk a lot about how our education system is impacting students of color but I want you to understand that white students are impacted as well. Every day white children are being taught that their peers of color do not matter. Every day the same messaging that is inundating our children of color with feelings of being less than is also communicated to white students who are members of our society, who will vote, who will spend money, who will hire people for positions and be members of the community.

Intersectionality stops us from creating new oppressions. It stops us from leaving people behind. Intersectionality is not just a thought, it is how we truly live our values. You will not be doing the work of racial equity without it.

IJEOMA OLUO



"We are the generation that can do this"

Clover Park student featured on #USvsHate

Thomas Middle School seventh grader, Noel Meza, has his video featured on the front page of the #USvsHate website.

Last fall, Noel and his classmates participated in the #USvsHate national art contest. The competition invites students to create public anti-hate messages for their school communities. Noel created a sticker illustrating the country's climb toward equal rights.

"My project is about how we are climbing the steps to overcome the problems of our country's past related to tolerance," he said. "Even though we have solved some problems, we still face many more."

His art piece was selected as a contest winner and he was invited to create a video explaining the message behind his submission.

Teacher Miriam Robinson describes, "Students read the novel *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor. To create background knowledge they watched the film "The Children's March" by Teaching Tolerance. They spent months learning about racism, equality, segregation, Civil Rights, Civil Rights leaders, through discussion and seminar. Our school is a bright spot because even though we have some challenges, like high poverty (80% low income) and transient populations, we have lots of successes. I believe our success has to do with providing a curriculum that represents our diverse population and also challenges them to explore difficult subject matters. These students did this work all on their own and with much effort. The student creator Noel not only created this sticker, but also printed and cut one out for all of his classmates."

<https://www.ourkidswa.com/thomas-middle-school-student-featured-on-usvshate-website/>



This story and many more can be found at ourkidswa.com. Let districts statewide see your good news by sending it to ourkids@wssda.org.



WSSDA **ONcall**

Protecting student privacy during remote learning

The Future of Privacy Forum (FPF) and National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) published a guide* to help schools address privacy challenges for students with disabilities during virtual learning.

Here are its take-aways.

Review what your school or district already uses.

Many education platforms include features that can be leveraged to support distance learning. When identifying and choosing technology tools, work with your attorneys and information security specialists to vet prospective solutions against FERPA requirements using a risk-based analysis. Use products that apply best practices like encryption, strong identity authentication, and a statement and terms of service that explain how the vendor's use of personally identifiable information (PII) from student education records complies with FERPA. Be transparent with parents, students and the school community. Make them aware of the risks of their children's online activity and share easy-to-understand tips to stay safe. Consult your team of experts—your attorneys, information security specialists and peers—and ask questions.

Share your student data privacy policy.

Let parents know your guidelines for protecting student data, how class recordings will be stored and why you chose the video conferencing platform. Not all students will have access to a webcam or feel comfortable being on camera. Allow parents to decide if their child will participate in video conferencing and provide an alternative method for students to connect with their teachers. Give parents a schedule of designated times when students are able to talk with their teachers and classmates and when the webcams will be in use. Provide safety and privacy tips to families who lack wifi at home and must use public wifi.

Use a platform designed for use in the K-12 classroom to ensure privacy laws are followed.

Avoid using platforms that require students to create accounts and classroom discussions with students since audio and video of a student is considered personal information. Store recorded video lessons in a secure place, available to limited staff members. Provide teachers with guidelines on keeping their video conferencing accounts secure. Determine a secure method for teachers to share web links to lessons with students.

*<https://bit.ly/3iskMVe>

Excerpted from a longer article that appeared in WSSDA's OnCall. Subscribe to receive ready-to-use district communication content, tools and tips.

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WSSDA *Direct* is evolving. Our hope is that it will grow into a platform that helps school directors share their knowledge, experience and perspectives with each other. In this way, it will become a resource informing and reflecting the work of Washington's school boards. *Direct* will be published quarterly. The views expressed by individual authors do not necessarily represent WSSDA policies or positions. If you have a disability and need this publication in an alternative format, please contact our Communications department.

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Non-partisan, student-centered, K-12 Advocacy

**Advance vital
programs and
services.**

**Expand access
to equitable
instruction.**

**Secure staff
and district
resources.**

Learn more about WSSDA's legislative priorities at wssda.org/priorities
email: strategicadvocacy@wssda.org



Download a copy of the above postcard at wssda.org/priorities to share with your local legislators or on social media. The 2021 legislative session starts January 11th, and students need your voice to inform decision-makers on what matters to our schools, staff, and students.