



WSSDA

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QUARTERLY NEWSMAGAZINE

WINTER 2022

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 Immediate Past President Danny Edwards
 Directors Christine Chew, Douglas Benjamin, Harlan Gallinger, Rick Maloney,Carolynn Perkins, Greta White, Julie Bocanegra, Aurora Flores, Wendy Morrow, Lindsay Lofstrom, Katherine Humphrey
 Marnie Maraldo (NSBA Representative)

Executive Director Tim Garchow
 Editor-in-chief Sean Duke
 Copywriter Laura Ohata
 Designer Robby McClellan
 Printing Capitol City Press



From the Executive Director

100 Years of WSSDA

I shared the ideas below at Annual Conference, but I think it's worth repeating. As WSSDA's centennial year ends, we can draw inspiration from the past to launch us into 2023.

A century ago, in 1922, WSSDA was created to serve as a resource for Washington's school boards, helping to ensure that the officials elected to govern public education have what they need to navigate any challenges that come their way.

And plenty of challenges there have been! While not quite as momentous, WSSDA emerged around the same time as several world powers, including the USSR. Though the world was different then, today's challenges are reminiscent of that era.

Disruptive social change was not limited to abroad. The U.S. saw issues of race and gender take center stage, as they do today. Women had just gained the right to vote. Then, the Indian Citizenship Act finally conferred citizenship on all Native Americans. A long 43 years later, the voting rights act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

Debate over curriculum was also a thing, as it is today. In 1925, the Butler Act prohibited evolution from being taught in Tennessee public schools; it was not repealed until 1965.

And then technology... In 1922, the first television transmission occurred. Helicopters and transatlantic flights took off. And right before WSSDA formed, the world endured a global pandemic. Anything sound familiar?

These parallels evoke the expression, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." For us, the constant has been the tireless work of WSSDA members, the school directors of Washington state. While today's challenges seem novel, they are not without precedent. And neither is the strength of your commitment or the quality of your leadership.

From 100 years ago through today, Washington's school directors have served their communities and fortified public education. WSSDA has been there all along, empowering them with tools, knowledge, and skills to govern with excellence and advocate for public schools.

Come what may in the next 100 years, WSSDA will continue that mission, guided by the courage, perseverance, and leadership of its members.

It's an honor to serve you,

Tim Garchow, WSSDA Executive Director





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WSSDA direct

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WSSDA members (with emcee Erin Jones) converge on Spokane for a smorgasbord of captivating keynoters, engaging breakouts, student entertainment, and opportunities to belong together at our 2022 Annual Conference. **p.14**



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From the Board President



A Vision for the Year Ahead

As I look toward 2023, I hope that my work to serve you as WSSDA president will honor the tremendous effort of those who came before me.

In the past year, the WSSDA board has engaged in important and impassioned conversations that helped us navigate challenges and plan WSSDA's strategic direction for the next few years. I'm also grateful we have a WSSDA staff that is forward-looking, knowledgeable, connected, and respected.

My plan is to continue to guide and support the excellent work already underway, building on the strengths that exist. WSSDA will continue to be a staunch supporter of school directors and will be the primary resource for school board-related issues. My vision is that WSSDA's first-rate services, support, and advocacy become more broadly known throughout the state. I will focus on elevating the work that WSSDA performs on a routine basis, all of which is in service to you and our 1.1 million students. I want to continue to grow participation in WSSDA events and make it known that all school board directors are represented, and all points of view are included in the decision-making process.

Finally, in the spirit of our recent conference theme, my vision includes creating spaces where everyone feels they belong; that includes each of us as WSSDA members and every student in our 295 school districts. As education leaders, we must stretch outside our comfort zones to learn from others whose backgrounds and experiences differ from our own. Let's listen and learn from each other and from our students.

So I'll close with an invitation to engage with WSSDA because it's your association. I promise to listen and learn from each of you. After all, that's how we grow and become even stronger leaders and public education advocates...together.

Ron Mabry, WSSDA Board President

Leadership Development *-Tricia Lubach*

Just as the school calendar gives September that "beginning of the year" feel and June graduations signal an end, WSSDA's calendar revolves around big events like Legislative Conference and General Assembly. But none loom as large as November's Annual Conference, which is "show time" for the 20 or so people who spend the year planning and executing it for more than 1,000 attendees. Even after 18 years of attending the conference, it is still a highlight of my year. And we hear it's a highlight for many of you too, a unique opportunity when education leaders from every corner of the state gather to learn, renew, create connections, and find encouragement from others who undertake the same hard but vitally important work.

Strategic Advocacy *-Marissa Rathbone*

Another year comes to a close in the blink of an eye as your strategic advocacy team turns its attention to the 2023 legislative session. The upcoming session, starting on January 9th, will last for at least 105 days and be full of returning and new policy and budget proposals. In keeping up with the annual theme of belonging, we hope you'll stay connected throughout the session by joining us every Thursday from 12 -1 pm for the (Leg Rep) Networking Hour, signing up for InSession, and checking our Legislative Updates webpage regularly for the Bill Watch and Weekly Calendar. All directors are invited to utilize these tools and resources and we are particularly encouraged by the involvement of district legislative representatives as the uniting advocate for their board and WSSDA. Feel free to reach out with questions or suggestions to strategicadvocacy@wssda.org.

Policy and Legal *-Abigail Westbrook*

We're excited to announce the newly issued versions of WSSDA's legal guides for school board members, including "Open Public Meetings" and "Avoiding Conflicts of Interest." There are two more updated legal guides coming very soon - these include the 2022 versions of "Parliamentary Procedure" and "The Basics of School Law." Keep an eye out for the December edition of Policy & Legal News, featuring legal issues connected to a building principal's searches of students. Finally, it was great to see so many of you at Law Conference and I'm eager to hear your feedback as I prepare for next year.



What's in a name?



Jamestown S'Klallam Tribal Council Vice Chair Loni Greninger speaks to the crowd during the naming ceremony of the athletic facilities at Sequim High School. The naming was a collaboration between the Sequim School District and the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe. The field is named in memory of alumni Myron Teterud, a longtime Sequim sports fan. The stadium is named stá'čəŋ stadium, a S'Klallam word meaning "wolf." The Tribe and the school district work together to provide resources and learning opportunities to the Sequim community, including the Jamestown Family Health Clinic, which provides primary medical services to both Tribal and non-Tribal citizens.

Get to know your officers

WSSDA's new leaders ready to make their mark on 2023

New officers for the WSSDA Board of Directors took the oath of office on November 19th at the Annual Conference held in Spokane. Some of the president's duties include interpreting WSSDA policy, chairing meetings, and appointing members to vacant positions on committees. As needed, the president may share some of those responsibilities with the president-elect and vice president, who also represent WSSDA before external groups, and in communications with the membership. At the end of their year-long terms, the president presides over the WSSDA Annual Conference, where newly elected officers are sworn in and the cycle begins again.



From left to right: 2023 WSSDA officers Sandy Hayes (President-elect), Ron Mabry (President) and Derek Sarley (Vice President) are sworn in at the 2022 Annual Conference.

2023 Calendar at-a-glance

January-February

- Federal Relations Network Advocacy Institute (FRN)
- Legislative Session Begins
- Legislative Conference and Day on the Hill
- OnBoard Trainings
- Board Boot Camp

March-May

- Spring Regional Meetings
- OnBoard Trainings
- Position Proposal Window

July

- Boards of Distinction Application

September-October

- WSSDA Elections
- General Assembly
- OnBoard Trainings

November

- Law Conference
- Annual Conference
- OnBoard Trainings
- Board Boot Camp

WSSDA election results

WSSDA Board of Directors

- DA 1** Douglas Benjamin, Bellingham
- DA 2** Harlan Gallinger, Issaquah
- DA 5** Katherine Humphrey, Boistfort
- DA 8** Wendy Morrow, Mabton
- DA 9** Lindsay Lofstrom, Deer Park

Legislative Committee

- DA 1** Carl G. Cary, Granite Falls
- DA 2** Luckisha Phillips, Federal Way
- DA 3** Ronda Litzenberger, Eatonville
- DA 4** Denise Tracy, Central Kitsap
- DA 5** Kelsi Hamilton, Chehalis
- DA 6** Trish Huddleston, Woodland
- DA 7** Zachary Miller, Cascade
- DA 8** Martha Rice, Yakima
- DA 9** Cindy McMullen, Central Valley
- DA 9** Nikki Otero Lockwood, Spokane
- DA 10** Scott Carruth Ritzville
- DA 11** Steve Christensen, Pasco

Resolutions Committee

- DA 4** Nancy Moffat, North Kitsap
- DA 6** Alan Reitz, White Salmon Valley
- DA 8** Norm Walker, Yakima

Nominating Committee

- DA 2** Trudy Davis, Federal Way
- DA 3** Kimberly Palmer Yee, Fife
- DA 5** Tiffany Sevruk, North Thurston
- DA 7** Anita Waller, Ephrata

Interscholastic Activities Comm.

- DA 1** Deborah Kilgore, Edmonds
- DA 2** Lori Oviatt, Riverview
- DA 3** Corey Strozier, Tacoma
- DA 5** Tanya Naillon, Onalaska
- DA 7** Roger Perleberg, Cashmere
- DA 9** Debra Long, Central Valley
- DA 11** Ruth Ladderud, Walla Walla



Katherine Humphrey

Boistfort School District • Elected to a 2-year unexpired term

Director Humphrey, a 4th generation farmer, ran for the WSSDA Board because she believes a platform to help school directors collaborate and do their jobs more effectively and efficiently is essential. She will bring her student-centered focus on learning and emphasis on local control to the board. A strong believer in the value of free public education, she has served on the Boistfort School Board since September 2002.



Lindsay Lofstrom

Deer Park School District • Elected to a 3-year term

Director Lofstrom is fairly new to WSSDA but fully committed to public education. After earning her teaching certificate from Gonzaga University, she taught for eight years in the Renton School District before starting a family. Now, she has three of her four children in the Deer Park School District. She has a passion for helping keep schools focused on the students and their educational growth while also helping to improve all students' access and sense of belonging.



Wendy Morrow

Mabton School District • Elected to a 3-year term

Director Morrow has been board president in Mabton for seven years. During that time, the district has navigated a new superintendent, COVID, having a RAD school, and contract negotiations. Mabton has been a WSSDA Board of Distinction for the last three years and Board of the Year in 2019. She spends a lot of time volunteering with Mabton's athletics programs and running the Booster Club. She is eager to represent small school districts at the state level.

2023 Boards of the Year

The Cascade, Walla Walla, and North Thurston School Boards have been named the 2022 School Boards of the Year. These three boards were selected for the highest level of recognition among 30 boards named as 2022 Boards of Distinction by the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA).

The Boards of Distinction application asks school directors to illustrate how their board's actions and decisions exemplified visionary leadership and helped their school districts close opportunity gaps and increase overall student success. To be awarded, boards had to show a clear link between their leadership in applying the Washington School Board Standards and closing gaps that impact student success.

"All three of these boards showed a clear commitment to supporting student gains in academic performance, mental health, and other areas of student success with decisions and actions that positively impacted their students, staff, families, and communities," said WSSDA Director of Leadership Development Tricia Lubach. "While all of the Boards of Distinction exhibited effective school district governance and strong leadership, these three Boards of the Year were particularly strategic about using all available resources to make up for learning losses during the pandemic. Each of them provided clear and robust evidence showing how their actions were in alignment with the best practices found in the Washington School Board Standards."



Above, from left to right: Cascade School District's board members are Chairman Trey Ising, Superintendent Dr. Tracey Beckendorf-Edou, Zachary Miller, Vice Chair Cyndi Garza, Judy Derpack, and Dr. Mike Worden.

Located in Leavenworth, the **Cascade School Board** focused budgetary and staffing resources on supporting students whose educational growth was negatively impacted during the pandemic, from the youngest students to those in high school. They established a full-day transitional kindergarten opportunity for 3-4 year-olds needing extra support to be kindergarten-ready, expanded virtual academy access to full-time for any K-12 student, and provided academic interventions for struggling middle school students. The board also authorized a social worker to address mental health needs for the district's approximately 1,260 students and assisted low-income and rural families in accessing internet connections to access online learning. Cascade's strategic plan is highly customized to the mountainous community set in picturesque Leavenworth, emphasizing the value of being outdoors and artful creativity, along with connected relationships as part of a quality education within an inclusive environment.

The **Walla Walla School Board**, whose district serves about 5,600 students, also took a multi-pronged approach to harnessing resources for students at every level, from pre-K to high school. The board thoughtfully leveraged federal pandemic relief funds (ESSER) to invest in programs and staff focused on closing opportunity gaps between student groups while providing learning acceleration for all students post-pandemic. Particularly impressive was the fact that despite academic disruptions caused by the pandemic, last spring, students outperformed their pre-pandemic peers in nearly every grade for both English and math. The impressive academic gains took place while the board also exhibited leadership in community transparency as it wrapped up district-wide construction as part of a 2018 bond. Additionally, the board steadfastly followed its established policies and procedures when faced with contentious library book challenges. Student voice was a meaningful part of the board's response to this issue.



Above, from left to right: Walla Walla Public Schools' board members are Eric Rindal, President Ruth Ladderud, Vice President Terri Trick, Derek Sarley, and Kathy Mulkerin. Walla Walla's superintendent is Dr. Wade Smith.

The **North Thurston School Board**, based in Lacey, leads a district with about 15,000 students. Like the other Boards of the Year, North Thurston invested in programs and staffing to close opportunity gaps and provide students with multiple opportunities to be successful. They funded a program for supplementary learning opportunities before, during, and after school that nearly doubled students' growth rates in reading, math, and science. The board authorized expanded implementation of Restorative Practices, actions designed to create a culture of empathy, accountability, and foster a sense of belonging for students and staff. The district also joined the largest federally-funded literacy study ever conducted, resulting in expanded access to instructional time and interventions for students, including in-person, weekly coaching.



Above, from left to right: North Thurston Public Schools' board members are Tiffany Sevruk, President Dave Newkirk, Vice President Gretchen Maliska, Graeme Sackrison, and Dr. Jennifer S. Thomas. North Thurston's superintendent is Dr. Debra Clemens.



From WSSDA members to the legislature

Preparing to bring school board priorities and voices to the capitol

Above: WSSDA's strategic advocacy team, consisting of Director Marissa Rathbone (center) and Specialist Logan Endres (right), were joined by former WSSDA Communications Coordinator Alisa Reynolds-Good at the capitol for the 2020 Day on the Hill.

This year, we heard from an unprecedented number of school districts at the annual Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) General Assembly. Debate surfaced diverse perspectives and insights, all of which improve WSSDA's relationship-building among school directors and with educational partners statewide.

While a majority vote determines the formal adoption of WSSDA positions, school boards also advocate for their own local priorities throughout the year. But when aligned, pairing WSSDA's legislative priorities with those of local school districts and other education advocacy groups mobilizes the greatest possibility for positive change in our public education system.

You need to be an optimist to advocate. And on January 9, a lot of optimists will start converging on Olympia when Washington state's 2023 legislative session begins. When it does, our 1,477 school board members will have a one-page document, WSSDA's legislative priorities, to supplement their advocacy efforts.

Each year, following its general assembly, WSSDA articulates its top priorities based on voting and feedback from its members, the school directors of Washington. The priorities, and the positions they're based on, are born of a democratic process similar to the creation of bills in the Legislature.

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2023 Legislative Priorities

"Educational equity can only exist when a student's level of opportunity and achievement cannot be predicted based on race, characteristics, or circumstances. Therefore, we must identify and eliminate any discriminatory practices and prejudices within our state's public education system."

The Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) is comprised of the state's 1,477 locally-elected school board directors who serve their communities and 1.1 million students. WSSDA contributes to building the future of public education by advocating to close student opportunity and achievement gaps. We do this by working to advance the policy, governance, and budgetary priorities of Washington's 295 school districts. The legislature has been supportive in response to the persistent and pandemic-related needs of our students, for which we are grateful. We look forward to working with you to continue progress on this commitment to our students, schools, and communities.



Meet the Requirements for Special Education

School districts are eager to equitably meet the needs of students by implementing the state and federal requirements for special education - but do not receive the resources to do so. We ask the legislature to invest fully in the mandatory services for eligible students, expand access to inclusionary practices, remove the artificial cap, eliminate application penalties, and recognize that costs vary for every district based on the uniqueness of each student and community.



Provide the Needed Resources for Ample, Equitable and Stable Education

School districts are expected to implement all aspects of Washington's program of basic education including graduation requirements. In order to do so effectively, schools must have more qualified adults in classrooms and buildings. To recruit and retain the best staff, including building administrators, schools must provide compensation increases equitably across all positions. We ask the legislature to:

- Stabilize district operations and program obligations;
- Amply and equitably fund staff and programs, based on student need, to close opportunity and achievement gaps;
- Advance Career and Technical Education programming; and
- Work to close regionalization factor gaps between adjacent districts.



Feed Students

Learning cannot occur when students are hungry. School meal programs should meet the diverse backgrounds, preferences, and experiences of all students. We ask the legislature to ensure that no student is hungry during the school day by providing universal free and nutritious school meals.



Construct Safe and Healthy Schools

When teaching and learning occur in safe and healthy environments, students are more likely to experience academic success. We ask the legislature to protect students and staff by securing their physical, social, emotional safety through an updated and relevant school construction formula and by engaging students in decision-making, increasing parent notification, and expanding staff training.



Transport Each and Every Student

Many students and families rely on school district transportation to access basic education. The real cost to maintain staff and equipment requires an update to the Student Transportation Allocation formula. We ask the legislature to provide equitable access to basic education by covering all costs related to student transportation.

The priorities serve two purposes. First, they highlight the pressing needs of 1.2 million K-12 public school students across the state. Second, they signal to legislators where school boards hope they will focus in the upcoming session.

“Each school board has its own set of priorities for advocacy,

but my hope is that WSSDA’s one-pager can supplement or even hone their voice into a unified direction for advocacy,” said Marissa Rathbone, director of strategic advocacy at WSSDA. “If it does, directors will be speaking with one voice, and therefore able to actualize results. I am excited for them to use the priorities document as a starting point for action.”

Why these priorities matter, in the voices of board members

SPECIAL EDUCATION

“Being a mom of special needs kids myself, one of the legislative priorities that pulled at my heart was fully investing in special education,” said Federal Way school board director Luckisha Phillips. “We all saw the deep impacts of remote learning, and special education during remote learning was a different kind of hard. Our students and families have returned to schools asking for help, and directors across the state took the opportunity to advocate for the special education community and push it to one of the top legislative priorities this year,” said Phillips.

“The state sets an arbitrary cap on what they will and will not spend for special education students,” said Granite Falls school director Carl Cary. “Typically, districts have around 10% who are special education students. In our district, we are closer to 20%. The state, in the way it funds, sets an arbitrary limit on how much it will pay per student. The difference is money we have to take out of the general fund, which is what we use to pay teachers and keep the lights on.”

Cary continued, “due to no fault of their own, these wonderful kids just need more. The adults in the room need to coalesce for these kids who need more and deserve more. To remove the arbitrary cap, and to fully fund special education, WSSDA came together and made that a priority. That is very encouraging, and I was very happy to see that.”

AMPLE, EQUITABLE, AND STABLE EDUCATION

“There are a lot of things that impact my school district,” said School Director Carl Cary of Granite Falls. “One of the biggest is regionalization. Every four years, the Washington state Legislature recalculates the formulas used to allocate funding to school districts, but those formulas are outdated. For every dollar Granite Falls receives, the neighboring school district receives two. They also happen to be a larger district,” said Cary.

“Being non-rural, it’s easier for them to attract and retain diverse, qualified staff, especially because they can pay more. The challenge for us is that a teacher could live in Granite Falls but work in the neighboring town and make \$20,000 more on the pay scale. Unfortunately, we had to try our best to be as close to those pay scale gaps as we could. That meant removing services and skinning down. It’s tough to convince a teacher to stay if they have been here for 15 years with a master’s degree [which the salary formula rewards]. All the barbecues, hugs, and pats on the back aren’t enough to keep them when they can get \$30,000 more a year just by driving down the street about 20 minutes.”

FEED STUDENTS

Aurora Flores, a board member for WSSDA and the Manson School District said, “in our district 69.5% of our students self-identify as low-income. This is almost 12% higher than the state average of 47.6%. As food insecurity becomes a real concern in our district, our state, and the nation, the importance of providing school meal programs that meet the diverse backgrounds, preferences and experiences of our students is more important than ever.”

“Research shows that many students are getting their healthiest meals at school and that those meals play an important role in supporting obesity prevention and overall student health by improving their diets and combating hunger,” said Flores.

“The research also indicates that student achievement is improved when children have healthy meals. Healthy meals contribute to healthy schools. Given the positives that healthy meals provide our students, WSSDA’s support of our priority to ensure that no student goes hungry during the school day by providing nutritious, healthy meals is crucial.”

CONSTRUCT SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

“We have the largest and sixth largest high schools in the state,” said Steve Christensen, board vice president of Pasco School District. “Our largest high school has 3,164 students enrolled, so we need 32 portable buildings to handle the overflow. The next largest instructs 2,504 students and relies on 29 portable buildings,” said Christensen.

“We are in dire need of a high school, but to help us get one, the formulas for setting space and construction rates need updating. Current teaching methods require more space and construction costs have also increased.”

“But at the same time, we are a little concerned about equity and distribution of funds, so any update will hopefully make it more equitable statewide. We are not the only school district in this situation, so these formulas need to be adjusted.”

Echoing that sentiment, Central Valley Board President Cindy McMullen states, “One of the challenges with funding for K-12 is that formulas used by the state often do not accurately reflect the true cost incurred by districts for the services they’re providing or the construction they are doing. The formulas for transportation and school construction are out of date.”

TRANSPORT EACH AND EVERY STUDENT

“Eatonville is a small rural school district encompassing 440 square miles,” explains Ronda Litzenberger, WSSDA’s Small Schools Committee chair and vice chair of the Eatonville School Board. “Our buses transport students over mountains, around canyons, through valleys and across rivers. The current one-size-fits-all funding model does not accommodate the long distances and sparse population of our community. Inflation has increased the cost of fuel, parts, and buses which has left us in dire need of reliable transportation. The inability to attract and retain a skilled workforce by paying competitive wages coupled with the tremendous amount of red tape required to properly train and license a new hire has resulted in extreme driver shortages. This shortage has caused daily bus route cancellations; directly impacting our most vulnerable student populations. No bus means no education for many of our kids. I see this lack of funding as an inequity that requires immediate attention.”

Get involved in the process

The 2023 legislative session will begin on Monday, January 9th and is scheduled for 105 days. To get ready for this long session and be a part of elevating WSSDA’s Legislative Priorities throughout it, you can do the following:

1. [Sign up for InSession](#), WSSDA’s weekly Legislative Updates, and share with your fellow school board members each week
2. [Register and attend “Leg Rep Networking Hour”](#) every Thursday from 12-1
3. [Register and attend “Leg Rep Network” webinars](#) the last Tuesday of every month from 5-6 pm



Nikki Otero Lockwood

SPOKANE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What do you do when you're not being a school director?

My family is a founding member of Haystack Heights Cohousing Development. This has been a five-year process starting with a few families wanting to build Spokane's first cohousing community. Downsizing was a huge effort for our family, moving from our beautiful old Craftsman that we called home for 23 years, with so many family memories, and yes, tears were shed. The transition to our new home, a condo, with a new vibe, has been cleansing and a wonderful reset. As team leader for the management of our Common House, where we cook and share common meals, invite guests to use our guest rooms, and have shared laundry facilities and meeting space, we have many processes to create together. The operational and physical work involved is a nice contrast to my responsibilities as a board director.

What are one or two issues/topics/challenges that are especially important to you and why?

As a parent of a student with a disability requiring special education, and also the parent of a neurotypical child, my journey to being a board director was because of the different experiences I saw for my two daughters. Different and not equal. While we had amazing educators for each, the system needed work to be more equitable and inclusive. This led me to my community organizing role as an employee of the ACLU of Washington around school-to-prison pipeline issues where I continued my learning around equity, inclusion, and building community power to make progress. Our school district, in solid relationship with diverse community voices, has made a commitment to equity and inclusion. I'm proud of the progress made so far and look forward to continued work towards equity and inclusion.



What is the most important thing you've learned through your board service that you'd like to share with others?

I have been a board member for a little over two years, but what a two years to be leading one of the larger school districts in our state! We tackled many divisive issues in our community from boundary changes, name and mascot changes, and educating in a pandemic. These divisive issues made for some uncomfortable board meetings and discussions. When I was a parent advocate and organizer, being uncomfortable to make the system better for my kids and other students always seemed worth it. As a board member, I find community engagement essential, while sometimes being very uncomfortable. Our community holds a lot of wisdom and it's worth pushing past the discomfort to engage. You can't make everyone happy, but holding space to make sure everyone is heard, goes a long way.



Reflections from WSSDA's 2022 strategic advocacy interns

By former student board representatives Brooklyn Arroyo, Pasco School District and Zachary Glenn, Kennewick School District

Our time as strategic advocacy Interns for WSSDA made one thing very clear, **WSSDA is committed to strengthening student representation in K-12 education governance.**

Brooklyn: When hearing about the opportunity to join the strategic advocacy team, I was immediately drawn to the opportunity it could offer me. After sharing our interest and qualifications through the interview process, we were excited to arrive in Olympia, where we experienced the environment of WSSDA's entire team and the grandeur of our work while visiting the halls of the state capital with Logan Endres, WSSDA's strategic advocacy specialist.

Brooklyn & Zachary: Throughout July and August, we searched every school district for a board policy and procedure on student representation. We found over 120 of them and used this information to compile the creative and unique ways boards address this important area. We also created a video series and webpage on WSSDA's website to give boards easy access to our findings. (See wssda.org/studentreps)

Researching student representation in school boards was enlightening, to say the least. Through many meetings and much reading, we came to really appreciate the scope and impact of student representatives. But the opportunity to focus on promoting the role and authenticity of student board representatives was only possible because of the WSSDA strategic advocacy team.

Zachary: From day one, it was clear WSSDA greatly valued my experience as a previous student representative and that I would be contributing directly to developing the webpages and materials for future student representatives. I am excited to see how the work can help board directors improve student representation in governance across Washington state.

Brooklyn: I feel successful and proud of the impact I have had on work that will genuinely benefit student representatives of the future. Just being part of a team for "strategic advocacy" has inspired me beyond belief. It has a nice ring to it, and even after this internship ends, I will continue to refer to myself as a strategic advocate.



OUR BOARDS BELONG

Washington's school directors converge on snowy Spokane in record numbers at WSSDA's Annual Conference

By Tricia Lubach, WSSDA Director of Leadership Development

If your feet hurt and your step counter worked overtime the week before Thanksgiving, you might have been one of the nearly 1,200 school directors, superintendents, administrators, or other education leaders who gathered in Spokane that week for the 2022 WSSDA Annual Conference. Or you might have been one of the 81 students who attended and produced that wonderful artwork depicting what "belonging" meant to you.

The theme of Belonging permeated the conference and its goal of providing "something for everyone" over the course

of three days. Packed into that short timeframe were more than 50 breakout sessions (many facilitated by school directors), three pre-conference workshops with more than 470 attendees, six OnBoard workshops with 360 available seats, two general sessions, and one fantastic celebration of leadership at the new-this-year President's dinner. There were eight committee or caucus meetings to meet everyone's needs... large schools, small schools and everything in between. The biggest challenge was fitting it all in.

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Within the general sessions, a first-ever panel of student board representatives lit up the stage with their honesty, encouragement, and energy. Emcee Erin Jones, WA 2022 Teacher of the Year Jerod Koepp, and Dr. Adolph Brown provided inspiration and wisdom, acknowledging some of the hard realities that students and families face and school directors must wrestle with as they lead their districts.

Doc Brown, who coined the phrase “empathy gap,” described how the things we carry around in our psychological “backpack” – hurts, resentments, a lack of connection or belonging – hold us back from being the leaders we are meant to be, just as they hold back our students. Holding up a mirror for self-reflection, he urged each of us to look into it and ask ourselves, “what do you need to take out of your backpack and stop carrying around with you?” And as a school leader, consider what you can do to help students empty their backpacks as you guide them towards the goal of the “three Es – Enrolled, Employed or Enlisted, the things that run our country.”

We hope everyone left the conference feeling inspired, appreciated, and filled with new learnings.

“You are the chief tone-setters. It’s okay to disagree; it’s not okay to disrespect.”

**Keynote speaker
Dr. Adolph Brown**



By the numbers

1141 people registered for conference
56% of registrants were from school districts with 2000 or fewer students
214 school districts had at least one attendee
203 superintendents participated in conference

Participants:

161 – Board Boot Camp
147 – Road to Belonging Preconference
142 – Law Conference
360 – Seats provided for OnBoard trainings

7,971 cups of coffee poured
1,425 servings of bacon dished
281 conference evaluations submitted
51 breakout sessions
12 months required for planning & execution

Desettling Belonging: Takeaways from Keynoter Jerad Koepp (Wukchumni)

Mr. Koepp began by noting the odds of his even being present. The totality of his tribe, the Wukchumni, once numbered as few as 25. “I don’t teach the truths of colonization because I want to destroy America. I do so because I believe it can actually live up to its ideals, but it can’t if it continually runs from its past.” He said many Native youths feel dispossessed of their heritage and even themselves. He applauded Since Time Immemorial curriculum but regretted its uneven implementation. He urged us to celebrate each other’s stories with authenticity and purpose so that all students feel they belong.



Closing the Empathy Gap: Takeaways from Keynoter Dr. Adolph Brown

As a neuroscientist, Dr. Brown shared that our brains get billions of signals per second. To cope, the brain does many things on autopilot, like form preconceptions. In prehistoric times, that was a benefit; now, not so much. He said we must overcome that with intentional thinking. He recommends self-reflection to rid ourselves of false notions and eliminate behaviors tinged by baggage from our past. He said, “Let’s get rid of anything keeping us from being excellent human beings.” While our minds and research draw generalized conclusions, he reminds us that every student, and adult, is “custom made.”



A Legacy of leadership

Graduates describe the value of the Leadership WSSDA program

If you attended the WSSDA Annual Conference in November, you got a glimpse into the year-long experiences of the 18 class members as they traveled from Olympia to Walla Walla, Vancouver, and finally to Spokane. At each location, they focused on different aspects of leadership, including leading for influence, leading for change, and leading for all. The two-day sessions were packed full of tours, expert speakers and panels, resources in every possible format (even podcasts!), interactive discussions and activities, and a whole lot of fun and appreciation for each other.

One of the surprise benefits of the program that graduates consistently cite is how strong the bonds are that form between them. Participants in Leadership WSSDA come from across the state, from the largest to the smallest districts, and from urban, suburban, and rural communities. Learning together in a small group of 15-20 directors leads them to look beyond preconceptions they might have arrived with about people from different backgrounds and create a broad network of fellow school board leaders with more in common than they may have expected.

"What a great experience, from beginning to end," wrote a 2022 graduate. Said another, "I was hoping for a better understanding of my role, but got so much more than that... resources, colleagues, and camaraderie."

If you're a school director with at least four years of experience and are interested in being part of the 2024 Leadership WSSDA cohort, add your name to our [list to be contacted](#) next fall.

The value of the biennial Leadership WSSDA program is best described through the words of the 2022 graduates:

"I am and will be a better leader."

"I'll use what I've learned in so many areas of my life"

"I learned much more about myself than I expected to, and also really value the relationships we built."

"Excellent opportunity to expand my knowledge and network with colleagues around the state."

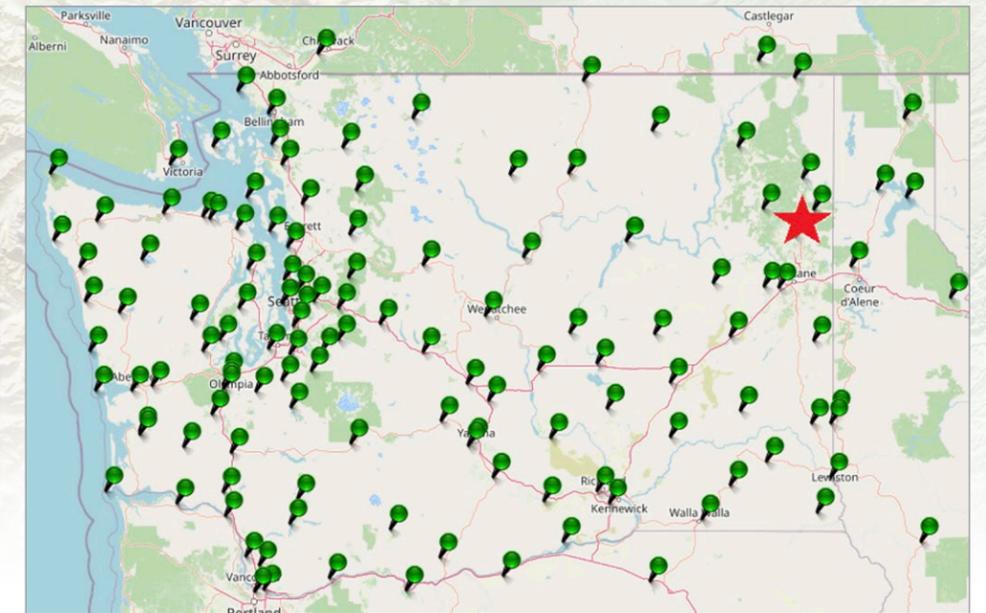
"Made me feel I will be able to accomplish great things!"



Above: The 2022 Leadership WSSDA Cohort visited Henrietta Lacks Health and Bioscience High School in the Evergreen (Vancouver) Public Schools during one of multiple site visits intended to educate board members on a variety of approaches to educational leadership.



Geophysical sensors like the one above support a statewide network (right) that provides data for a variety of scientific endeavors.



Riverside Schools collaborates with a statewide scientific cooperative on the installation of a geophysical sensor

A new GPS-based geophysical sensor has been installed at the school district facility of Riverside Schools in Chattaroy, Washington through a partnership with the Washington State Reference Network (WSRN). This new sensor provides valuable data to support scientific studies, surveying, mapping, construction, and public safety.

The WSRN is a statewide cooperative of public and private sector partners that has developed a statewide network of GPS ground sensors. This network feeds data to a central processing center that generates 'correctors' that improve field GPS observations from meters to millimeters in real-time. This also serves multiple scientific studies (e.g., plate tectonics, earthquakes, atmospheric). The WSRN provides data from a its cooperative array of 150+ sensor sites to scientific research entities, including Central Washington University and the USGS, that develop models of plate tectonic motion, an essential foundation for the state earthquake warning system. These kinds of networks are widely implemented around the world, often encompassing entire countries. The WSRN was one of the

first in the U.S. (2002) and provides full state coverage.

The area around Deer Park represented a gap in the statewide array of these sensors. The Riverside School District facility provided an optimal location for the new sensor.

Many schools in the state have become host sites for WSRN sensors, like Yelm, Graham, Hope ID, Carbonado, Dayton schools, Yakima and Grays Harbor colleges, and others. Each school is a site for the equipment provided by the WSRN; installed and operated at no cost to the schools. The WSRN and partners provide educational opportunities for the participating schools in the form of short classes on GPS and related science.

There are thousands of these sensors globally, each with a unique 4-character code. The new Riverside Schools sensor has been designated "RAMS", a nod to the school mascot.

Other partners hosting similar sensors in the Spokane area include the City of Spokane, Spokane County, WSDOT, Lincoln County, Kalispel Tribe Natural Resources, and Pend Oreille County.

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for helping us foster a sense of
belonging at our conference



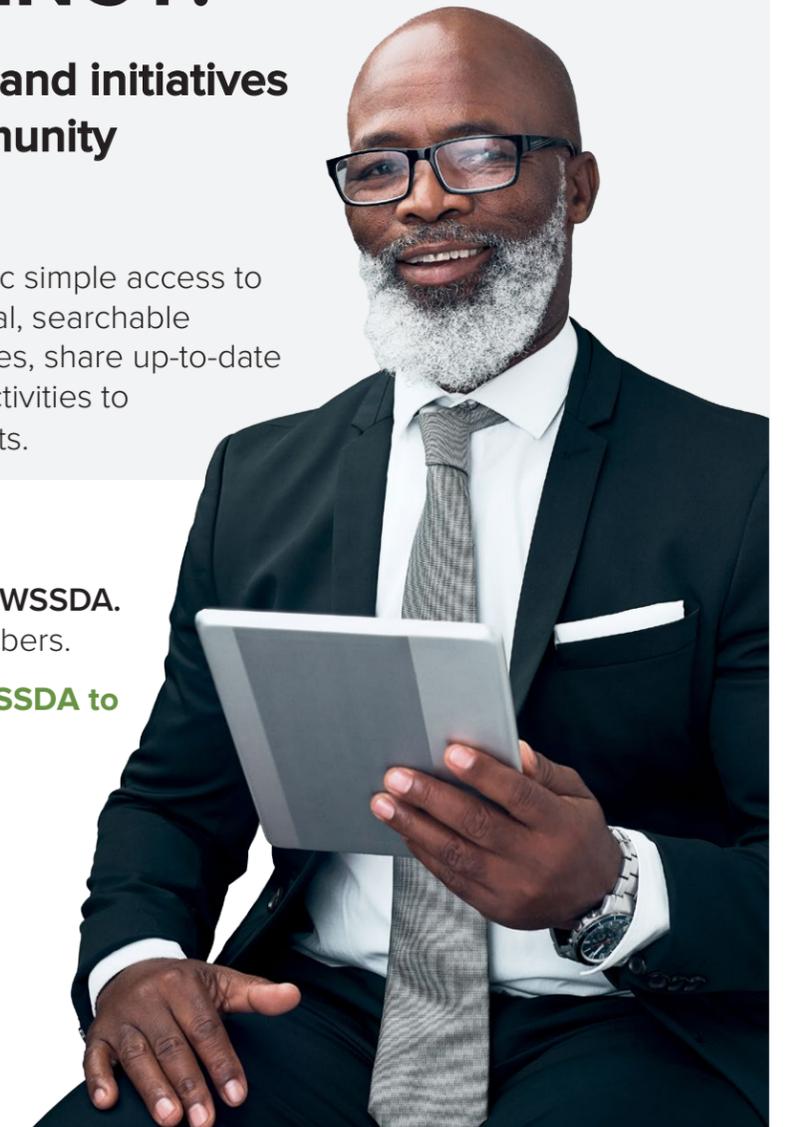
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WSSDA direct

QUARTERLY NEWSMAGAZINE

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.

Ron Mabry, President ron.mabry@ksd.org
 Sandy Hayes, President-Elect sbdistrict4@nsd.org
 Derek Sarley, Vice President dsarley@wwps.org
 Danny Edwards, Immediate Past President edwardsd@rsd407.org
 Tim Garchow, Executive Director t.garchow@wssda.org
 Sean Duke, Communications Officer s.duke@wssda.org

WSSDA DIRECTORY

General Information 360-890-5781
 Leadership Development leadershipdevelopment@wssda.org
 Strategic Advocacy strategicadvocacy@wssda.org
 Policy and Legal Services policyandlegal@wssda.org
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 Annual Conference 2022 Preview: We Belong Together
 Book Review: Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity

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