

# Washington Principal

ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

VOLUME 2 - 2019-20



## ELFISH ANTICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### *ALSO IN THIS ISSUE*

- Social Emotional Learning
- Dr. Joe Sanfelippo on Telling Your Story





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## ELFISH ANTICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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**Cover photo:** BJ Rush (Instructional Coach), Craig Pearson (Principal), and Kara Kent (Assistant Principal) of Pleasant Valley Primary engage the community on social media.

*Photo by Lindsey Riolo*

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1021 8th Ave. SE • Olympia, WA 98501-1500  
 360.357.7951 • www.awsp.org

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## Letting Go of the Asterisk\*

**David Morrill**

*Communications Director, AWSP*

### We've all seen it

in multiple places – the little star that signifies a condition to the claim being made:

- \* Some assembly required.
- \* Batteries not included.
- \* May cause drowsiness, headaches, or irritability. (This one is especially disconcerting.)

This month, we challenge you to ask yourself and your staff, "What is my 'asterisk'?" What is keeping you from moving forward, from investing in yourself, or from taking on the next big project? This asterisk may read something like, "I'm too new." Or, "I'm too busy," "It's not practical," or "I'm not needed in that area."

This issue is full of examples of leaders who are letting go of the asterisk. They jumped head-first into leadership in spite of the "what-ifs" and "buts." From a team-wide focus on Social-Emotional Learning to tips on telling your school's story, we hope these articles inspire you. February is Future Educators Month, and we encourage you to find the next great teacher among your students or paras, and the next great principal among your staff.

Some asterisks are there for good reason (objects in mirror ARE really closer than they appear!), but others are self-imposed. We challenge you to question your asterisks and take the next step you might be holding back from. No extra batteries required.

- \* For a list of ways you can let go and jump in, to helping with your professional association (that's us!), check out page 15 of the AWSP Member Handbook at [www.awsp.org/handbook](http://www.awsp.org/handbook). ■



*David Morrill is the AWSP Communications Director. He serves as Managing Editor for Washington Principal.*

# ASK A PRINCIPAL

## “How Does Your School or District Use Social Media?”

In the fall, we asked AWSP members on Facebook, “What are some positive ways your school or district is using social media?” Here are some of the great responses we received:

“ We are focusing on a number of things but a new one this year is recognizing our staff culture warrior. Each faculty meeting, a description of the new winner is read by the past winner. The traveling Meridian HS bobblehead then stays in their room for two weeks. We do the same for classified staff. A picture of the recipient and bobblehead is posted on our district social media pages with a brief summary of what was read in the meeting. #CultureWarrior”



**Derek Forbes**

*Principal and CTE Director, Meridian High, Meridian SD*

“ We have Facebook and Twitter linked. Social media has served as a communication tool to inform families and community, but its main purpose is to provide a glimpse into learning in our classrooms. It started with a way to kick off our work with STEM and showcase STEM learning. It has expanded to highlight curriculum and priorities for learning in classrooms. Social media has also connected extended families and friends that live a distance away and cannot be at concerts, events, and activities. In addition, social media celebrates achievements and learning.”

**Tammy Jones**

*Principal, Riverview Elementary, Snohomish SD*

“ Social media is a great way to share the story of your school. If the school isn't telling the story, then a few people who might not be happy with the school are creating the story. I love how thoughtfully our school shares the work of our amazing students! If it weren't for social media, families might not be aware of all the thoughtful ways our staff are elevating our students.”

**Shari Walsh**

*Assistant Principal, Fairhaven Middle, Bellingham PS*

“ We use Twitter and Facebook to share our story. We learned to be intentional about this from @Joe\_Sanfelippo. If we don't share our story, no one else will. Our teachers take turns celebrating stories and successes from their classrooms (each department selects a month to publish Facebook posts). We have also integrated YouUplift.com to incorporate and spread positive messages from staff and students through our school website and social media platforms.”



**Brendan Johnson**

*Principal, Asotin Senior High, Asotin-Anatone SD*

“ I've done lots of things in my five years as a principal for our school Facebook site. I'm always trying to think of new ways to engage our community. We've done:

- Countdown to School,
- High Five with Mrs. Hollinger (a weekly news style video with students),
- Alumni (sharing the successes our former students have had in life),
- High school alumni (spotlighting students who went to our elementary school and now attend the local high school),
- Fun Fact Friday (where we share a fun/interesting fact about a staff member),
- Throwback Thursday (where we share a baby picture of a staff member and the first to answer wins a spirit wear prize),
- And this year I'm doing Social Emotional Sunday where we are showcasing the SEL learning happening in morning meetings.

But, more than anything, the posts are always positive and focused on our amazing students, staff, and community!”

**Stephanie Hollinger**

*Principal, Evergreen Forest Elementary, North Thurston PS*





## Future Educators Month and Future School Leaders Day

February 2020 is AWSP's second annual **Future Educators Month**. Somewhere in your school there is a teacher with the skills to become an amazing principal, and a student with the skills to become an amazing teacher. If you know one of these teachers or students, "give 'em your keys" by showing them support and encouraging them to take a closer look at the principalship or education as a career. You can find downloadable "keys" on our website at [www.awsp.org/FEM](http://www.awsp.org/FEM).

We're also offering our **Future School Leaders Day** workshop on Feb. 26 in the SeaTac area. This workshop is designed for teachers and students to explore their future in education. Whether you're currently in education and considering the next big career step, or just interested in learning more about a career in education, AWSP's Future School Leaders Day is for you. Attendees will hear from current teachers and administrators on why they chose the profession. Learn more and encourage your teachers and students to register at [www.awsp.org/FSLD](http://www.awsp.org/FSLD).

Check out our article on the importance of encouraging future leaders on page 19.



## Ridgeview Elementary's Calm Room

With the help of counselor James Clark and Principal K.C Mitchell, the Ridgeview Elementary school in the Yakima School District created a "Calm Room," where children, adults, and staff can find a space to relax and, if necessary, de-escalate. How does it work? Does it work? Watch the our video on YouTube to find out.



## AWSP's Political Action Committee (PAC): We Need You!

**Are You on the AWSP PAC (Bipartisan) Party Bus?** AWSP has built a strong and respected reputation with legislative stakeholders as the go-to association for expert advice and recommendations on education issues within Washington state. We built this by actively advocating for our members as well as for K-12 education and all students.

Having the ability to provide bipartisan financial support to state leaders and candidates who champion our mission and values assists us in our advocacy efforts. AWSP-WSPLEA (or PAC) supports these efforts within our state and on behalf of our members by raising and spending money to contribute to candidates and issues that support educators' interests.

**Not sure if you're a member?** Check your status! Email Cris Sippel at [cris@awsp.org](mailto:cris@awsp.org).

**Sign up today!** PAC contributions are voluntary and separate from your AWSP dues. We welcome all who are not currently contributing to your association's PAC to sign up today! Learn more at [www.awsp.org/PAC](http://www.awsp.org/PAC).

## Shannon Wiggs: Legacy of Service

Shannon Wiggs was a beloved member of the AWSP family who passed away on January 4, 2020. In her educational journey going from Home Economics teacher to Activities Coordinator to Principal to Assistant Superintendent, she touched the lives of the students, staffs and communities where she worked and lived. She served both on AWSP camp staffs and AWSP boards and always along the way brought her legendary humor, kindness and cooking. She will be greatly missed!



## AWSP Staff Changes



Angela Spriggs

### AWSP Welcomes Angela Spriggs as Fiscal Coordinator

Angela joined AWSP as the new fiscal coordinator in December. She's incredibly talented and knows her numbers. Angela joined us from the Tumwater School District where she worked for 19 years. She lives in Tumwater with her husband, Kenny. She has two daughters, Alyssa and

Stephanie, and two grandchildren, Blake and Sadie. Don't be surprised by a new voice answering the phone at AWSP! Send Angela a welcome email at [angela@awsp.org](mailto:angela@awsp.org).



Chris Espeland

### AWSP Welcomes Chris Espeland as Inclusion Project Manager

We have a contract with OSPI to help principals across the state improve their inclusion practices. Part of that contract includes bringing on a temporary project manager to help us manage that work, so we're happy to have Chris Espeland on board. She's doing an internship with Washington State

Superintendent of the Year Dr. Greg Baker from Bellingham SD and pursuing a doctorate of her own at UW. You'll be seeing and hearing more about her work in the coming year. Send Chris a welcome email at [christine@awsp.org](mailto:christine@awsp.org).



Keith Atchley

### Goodbye, Keith Atchley!

In bittersweet news, Keith is leaving AWSP. Good for him because he has been trying to retire for over a year now and we just wouldn't let him! Keith joined our team as a bookkeeper in the spring of 2018 and has helped our association tremendously during his time with us. Keith is best known for getting his daily steps in around the office and

his love of pizza and sweet treats. We'll miss you, Keith!

## Susan Fortin Joins the ESD 113 Board

The Capital Region Educational Service District (ESD) 113 Board of Directors has named Susan Fortin to fill the board vacancy left by Rick Anthony. Susan retired from AWSP in August, where she had worked since 1991 — most recently serving as our director of student leadership. Susan joins former AWSP Director of Middle Level Programs Don Rash and former AWSP Board member Bill Williams on the board. Congrats, Susan! (Photo courtesy of ESD 113.)



## 30-Year Anniversaries



Annalee Braley

**Annalee Braley** celebrated her 30th year with AWSP in November. Annalee started at AWSP when she was just 19 years old and has worn many different hats over the years. She is now our Membership Coordinator and singlehandedly works with all 295 districts and many others maintaining AWSP's strong membership base. Annalee, you are amazing and inspiring. We wouldn't be here without you!



Bill Barnes

In December, **Bill Barnes** celebrated his 30th anniversary of facilitating his first ever Challenge Course program, which he did on the Cispus Challenge Course. Bill has a variety of experience with offering team-building exercises both on and off site of the Learning Center's courses. He currently manages our Chewelah Peak Learning Center. Be sure to visit him with a group of students to get that "peak" experience. Awesome work, Bill!



## Equity Conference Registration Opens Feb. 26

Join AWSP, WASA and WSSDA as we continue our journey to increase student outcomes for ALL students by focusing on educational equity and its application from the boardroom to the classroom. This annual Equity Conference features keynotes and practitioner-led breakout sessions around equity-related topics such as disability, race, gender, SES/Class, ethnicity, and cultural-competence. Registration opens Feb. 26 at [www.wasa-oly.org/Equity20](http://www.wasa-oly.org/Equity20).



**Meet Joe Fenbert**

A warm smile. A fun joke. An interesting story. These are all things you might encounter upon meeting Student Leadership’s Joe Fenbert.

Joe joined AWSP in 1993 as an assistant challenge course manager at Cispus and a program coordinator for the Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL). As an ASB officer at Federal Way High School (Federal Way PS), he attended Mt. Rainier Leadership Camp at Cispus in 1979. Joe served on the staff of the Mt. Baker session of leadership camp staff, and was on the founding team that launched Cascade Middle Level Leadership Camp in 1993 and La Cima Leadership Camp in 2004.

His professional education career includes eight years teaching middle level students at Tonasket Middle (Tonasket SD) and Evergreen Middle (Everett SD) and three years teaching in Venezuela and Honduras. He graduated from Green River Community College where he was the ASB president and from Eastern Washington University where he lettered in track and field and earned a bachelor’s degree in education. He currently serves on school board for the White Pass SD. Joe and his wife, Roanne, an elementary teacher, live in Randle and have two sons.

Want to send Joe a “hello” email? Contact him at [joef@awsp.org](mailto:joef@awsp.org).



**Did You Know?**

If your district hasn’t already allocated its TPEP 664 dollars, the money can be used for Summer Conference registration. It can also be used for just pre-conference sessions or pre-conference sessions and the full Summer Conference registration. Register for the 2020 AWSP/WASA Summer Conference at [www.awsp.org/SC20](http://www.awsp.org/SC20).



Voxer is a live messaging application that brings push-to-talk technology to smartphones. Their service features live and recorded voice: if you push the button to talk, you can be heard on the other end as you speak, but everything is also simultaneously recorded so you and the recipient(s) can play back any message later.

Unlike other push-to-talk services and systems, Voxer also has integrated text, photo, and location sharing which can be sent alongside voice messaging. You can talk to individuals or groups — select up to five chat participants to communicate with at once (or up to 500 using Voxer Pro).

Voxer’s benefits to educators include:

- **Instant Communication:** Use your voice to connect instantly with faculty, press a button and talk.
- **Never Miss a Message:** Stay in-sync with the whole school and confront core safety with Extreme Notifications.
- **Listen Live or Listen Later.** Class already in session? All messages are streamed instantly and recorded for later.

Here’s what Lakeside High Principal Brent Osborn had to say about Voxer:

*“Voxer is a walkie talkie app that allows me to send voice messages easily to my teachers. How many times have you popped into a class, and then tried to type a message on your phone or go to your desk to email? Instead, right outside the door, send them a Vox message directly to their email. No typing for you, and you honor the teacher by communicating.” (Thank you to Brent Osborn for the suggestion!)*

Check out Voxer Business for educators at [www.voxer.com/education](http://www.voxer.com/education).



# Expand Your Leadership Network by Serving with AWSP

## Cameron Grow

2019-20 AWSP Board President,  
Principal, Lincoln Middle School,  
Pullman SD

### As we move into

the second half of the school year, this is the time when we reach out to collaborative partners to solve challenges happening within the building.

During my time with AWSP, my collaborative team became much larger than I ever could have imagined. We have many principals in the state who may not have a large collaborative team for a variety of reasons, ranging from district size to time constraints. Being a part of the structure at AWSP has allowed me to expand my team.

### IT STARTED WITH A PHONE CALL

My AWSP journey began during my second year as principal here at Lincoln Middle School here in Pullman. Former AWSP Middle Level Director Don Rash gave me a call and asked if I would like to take part in a couple of committees that needed eastside members. A month later, I went to my first AWSP middle level meeting in Seattle. I didn't know what to expect, and to be honest, I was a little nervous.

“ I now had a team of principals from around the state with amazing knowledge and experience I could pull from.”



At the time, I can still remember president-elect Randy Heath made me feel at home immediately. He gave me opportunities to learn and to provide input to the larger team. Randy told me this would become a go-to team for me when trying to solve problems within my own building. He was 100 percent correct. I now had a team of principals from around the state with

amazing knowledge and experience I could pull from.

### STATEWIDE INSPIRATION

Over the years, I focused on a couple of different roles within the team. My last role landed me on the AWSP board. During this time, I have been able to establish some amazing

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relationships with principals from across the state. They are leaders who are here for kids, their staff, and their communities. They inspire me and continue to help me believe in myself and what I can do with my kids, my staff, and my community. These principals have played a role on the board over the course of the past 10 years. From Nathan Plummer in Sultan, to Ken Schutz in Spokane, Heidi Sutton in Yakima, Kelly Boyd in Coulee City, Michael Harrington in Finley, Erika Burden in Cheney, and finally Aaron Fletcher in Spangle — these are now some of my best friends on the planet. It was all because of my time serving on the board with each of these amazing leaders.

As the president this year, I have the opportunity to reflect on how much of a privilege it is to serve principals from around the state. The focus of this column is to show that you can begin extending your leadership network to others from around the

“ If you get the chance to serve, please take this opportunity to build a much larger collaborative team for yourself.”

state by being a part of AWSP boards, grade level committees, and advisory councils. If you get the chance to serve, please take this opportunity to build a much larger collaborative team for yourself. You may find an amazing new group of friends who will inspire you to become the best principal you can be.

AWSP – Strong Principals. Strong Schools. Strong Students. ■



Cameron Grow is the 2019-20 AWSP Board President. He has been principal at Lincoln Middle School in Pullman School District since 2007.

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# RECOMMENDED READING

 SCHOLASTIC

AWSP is partnering with Scholastic to bring you book recommendations related to school leadership and education. Here are this quarter's recommendations.



Find these books at [scholastic.com/teachers](http://scholastic.com/teachers)

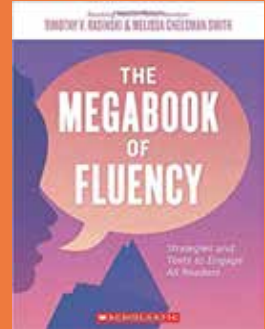
## FOR EDUCATORS

### The Megabook of Fluency

By Timothy V. Rasinski and Melissa Cheesman Smith

Fluency expert Timothy V. Rasinski teams up with Melissa Cheesman Smith, a veteran fifth-grade teacher, to help teachers effectively weave fluency work into their daily reading instruction. The book is packed with engaging text and tools, an assessment scale, and high-quality ready-to-use lessons including text phrasing and tonality, echo reading, word ladders, and more! Given the importance of fluency — and its pivotal relationship

to comprehension and word recognition — the potential is high for improving students' overall reading achievement and their performance in other content areas.



## FOR STUDENTS

### Third Grade Mermaid

By Peter Raymundo – Grades 2-4

Cora is a small mermaid with a *big* personality. But like so many mermaids in the third grade, she is struggling to truly be herself. She wants to be like the Singing Sirens, the most glamorous swim team in the sea. Unfortunately, an annoying roadblock — er, *seablock* — keeps getting in her way. When Cora fails her spelling test, her coach says she can't be on the team unless she gets an A on the next one!

Can Cora conquer her spelling test, make the swim team, *and* stay true to herself at the same time?



## FOR STUDENTS

### Just Another Girl

By Elizabeth Eulberg – Grades 10-12

Hope knows there's only one thing coming between her and her longtime crush: his girlfriend, Parker. She has to sit on the sidelines and watch as the perfect girl gets the perfect boy, because that's how the universe works, even though it's so completely wrong.

Parker doesn't feel perfect. She knows if everyone knew the truth about her, they'd never be able to get past it. So she keeps quiet. She focuses on making it through the day with her secret safe, even as this becomes harder and harder to do. And Hope isn't making it any easier.

In "Just Another Girl," Elizabeth Eulberg astutely and affectingly shows us how battle lines get drawn between girls, and how difficult it then becomes to see or understand the girl standing on the other side of the divide. You think you have an enemy. But she's just another girl.



**PSST!** Want a chance to win one of these books and others, complimentary of Scholastic? Send an email to [caroline@awsp.org](mailto:caroline@awsp.org) with the word "reading" to be entered to win!





# Lessons from Laina

## Wellpinit's First Native Female Principal Builds a Culture of Trust

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap*

#### Dr. Teena McDonald

Associate Clinical Professor,  
Principal Program Coordinator, and  
Superintendent Program Faculty;  
Washington State University

#### Dr. Mike Dunn

Superintendent, NEWESD 101

“In Native cultures, wise elders will caution youth about providing the space to make time to understand, whereas in public schools, rarely is that incubating space allowed or allotted.”

When I visited Phillips, I noticed she had a puppy in her office. She said it was a stray and she was taking it home.

Many principals hope to positively affect the culture of the schools they lead through specific programs, relationship building, and professional development. Wellpinit Principal Laina Phillips lives her culture through her lifelong understanding of the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

As a tribal member, Phillips is the first female Native member to come back to her reservation and serve as a principal in the very district she grew up in. It is uncharted territory for a tribal member to be in a school leadership position. She is cognizant of the monumental step she has taken.

#### MATRIARCHAL MENTORS

As Phillips grew up and developed goals in middle and high school, she sometimes felt like a square peg going into a round hole. American public education was primarily developed around different cultural norms than her own, and she struggled with the absence of space between listening and doing.

In Native cultures, wise elders will caution youth about providing the space to make time to understand, whereas in public schools, rarely is that incubating space allowed or allotted. One person who understood Phillip's reality was a valued teacher,



Phillips with her grandmother, one of the matriarchs who shaped her life.

Jane Swiatek, her English teacher and ASB advisor, who still works in the building where Phillips is principal. Swiatek was a key figure in preparing her to be ready for college; she was there when Phillips needed encouragement and self-belief when the initial struggles of college education set in; and she is still there today as other Wellpinit students travel their own educational journeys.

#### NATIVE CULTURE IMPACTS CURRENT WORK

From the time Phillips was a toddler, she was blessed by a strong matriarchal society. Her grandmother, mother, and numerous aunts taught Phillips to sit, and listen and take it all in before speaking. Today, she heeds that wisdom as a principal, saying, “I imagine myself as one of my aunties and I just take it all in. I listen and feel the person's passion. I ask questions to allow people to have their voice, always bringing it back to maintaining the relationship we have developed.”

*Continued on page 14*

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It is noteworthy that the wisdom Phillips gained from the matriarchs in her family is mirrored in current research on highly reliable organizations and leaders. Leaders who take the time to give space for understanding from the time they hear about a problem or an issue to reacting to it are considered to have a more highly reliable and successful organization.

## COLLABORATION DEVELOPS TRUST

Phillips implements the wisdom of listening and experiencing other's passion with the students, teachers, parents, and community members she serves. After initially serving as a teacher, she became a school improvement leader, working as a data instructional coach, before becoming a principal. Through an Indian demonstration grant, Phillips had the opportunity to participate in training through the University of Washington for a Native Education certificate. The program provided instruction and experience about Native-centered, tribal-centered, culturally relevant pedagogy. This two-year program brought participants together in a truly collaborative way; they learned not by being in a room together, but rather through encouragement to get out into the community and engage with its members. "I was already deeply



Principal Phillips treats every student with respect and feels it is her mission to help all students be successful.



Phillips in her middle/high school principal's office, now feeling at home.

“ Phillips views building a culture of trust and relationships as a primary priority on a daily basis. In her own past, she felt Native students did not always feel that trust.”

connected to my own community, but this helped me learn the importance of our teachers connecting with the community,” said Phillips.

Today, Phillips's strategy for teacher retention is to assure her teachers are so connected to the community that they feel they are a part of it. She laments how, in her district, for years teachers would come for a couple of years to get some type of loan forgiveness or certification and then leave. By more intentionally connecting teachers with the community to help them feel totally comfortable living there, knowing families, and tribal traditions, she explains how that helps the district keep teachers fully invested. Now, Wellpinit teachers do more than merely live in “teacherville” (housing available to teachers on the reservation), but actually become a part of the community. The Native education certificate program she completed helped her learn how to foster and support this reality.

Phillips views building a culture of trust and relationships as a primary priority on a daily basis. In her own past, she felt Native students did not always feel that trust. Her own educational journey taught her a teacher cannot come into the school and say, “I am your teacher; you need to trust and follow me.” She learned that the opportunity for teachers to connect with students, and to build a place of trust and understanding, can lead to instruction and learning occurring in a natural, even explosive way. She witnessed how students felt about teachers when they perceived their teachers were not there to stay, nor did they necessarily have their best interests at heart.

Today's Wellpinit students notice teachers are staying longer and want to understand how native students learn and gain understanding. Phillips explains this very critical relationship, articulating, “It is a back and forth — 10 steps forward in instruction and 900 steps back in trust and relationships. Teachers have to continually build relationships before instruction can be successful.”

As a principal, she continues to experience that students, staff and parents often have a need to “unload,” and that they each unload on something specific to their reality. When people do that, Phillips explains, “I always try to bring it (the conversation or issue) back to relationships.” She goes on to say, “Kids have stuff going on... it is not



“ Embracing the lessons of her own culture, she has developed resiliency and incredible wisdom and perseverance, helping students who are today the student she once was.”

anyone’s fault. We just have to listen and understand. We need to really listen and observe and understand before we do something.”

### LESSONS FROM LAINA

Phillips knows being a principal is about instructional coaching and leadership. She believes collaboration and teamwork are the characteristics that pull the organization together, and strives to never discount the power of either. Sagely, she notes, “The biggest thing I want for my profession and my community is

that leaders and teachers take the time, and build space, between listening and doing. Take the time for understanding and to demonstrate real compassion. Build an intentional space between listening and doing to have time to collaborate and talk. By doing this, we engage in culturally responsive pedagogy.”

Importantly, Phillips is clear that one of her goals is to make her grandmother, mom and aunties proud. In the uncharted territory of a tribal member serving in a public-school leadership position, Phillips is



Jane Swiatek is one of the influential Wellpinit teachers who helped her reach her dreams, and now Phillips is her principal.

doing just that. Embracing the lessons of her own culture, she has developed resiliency and incredible wisdom and perseverance, helping students who are today the student she once was. Hers is an example, a story, from which much is to be learned. ■





Will J., Class of 2023

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SP\_6071



Steilacoom Historical School District's theme this year is "The Science of SEL."

# THE SCIENCE OF Social Emotional Learning

Education must be about focusing on the head and the heart

## Dr. Kathi Weight

Superintendent, Steilacoom Historical School District No. 1

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap*

I am a little embarrassed to admit that I kept almost every school artifact from my three daughters' elementary school years.

My very favorite is a writing assignment from when my youngest daughter was a second grader. The sentence prompt was a typical one,

and asked students to share their favorite part of school. In all of her second grade wisdom, Bella wrote, "I love school because my teacher cares about my heart, not just about my brain." Bella is now a senior in college and I still think about her thoughtful reflection and apply it to my work as a superintendent.

Caring about the hearts of those we work with, both students and staff, is the most important thing we do in education. With an intentional focus on social emotional learning (SEL), and through a lens of "school connectedness" and belonging, we can better attend to the hearts of those we serve.





From the first day on campus, students should feel welcomed and valued.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENT

With heightened attention to the connection between mental health and academic success, schools are increasingly providing a full continuum of mental health supports to students. Social and emotional development is not just about the skills individuals possess, it is also about the features of the educational setting we provide. Students need to know adults care for them and genuinely believe in their potential.

From the first day on campus, students should feel welcomed and valued, and immediately recognize the unique connectedness of the school community. But when we only emphasize students' social emotional competencies, we may overlook the equally important influences of learning environments which support student belonging and relationship building, with consistent adult modeling of social emotional competencies, mindsets, and skills.

To promote students' social and emotional competence, it's important for schools to simultaneously foster a supportive staff environment that cultivates the social and emotional capacity of the adults in the building. Successful SEL implementation must intentionally nurture a work environment in which staff feel supported, empowered, able to collaborate effectively, build relational trust, and be provided with professional development in support of staff social emotional skills. As the ambassadors of adult SEL, we can design environments where staff collaborate and develop

professionally, while modeling social and emotional competence.

## THE SCIENCE BEHIND SEL

We were extremely intentional about engaging staff with our social emotional learning initiative by emphasizing the interdependence of social-emotional and cognitive development. We took a brain science approach to the work. Understanding how the brain works, what stimulates it and how to harness the connections in a positive way enables staff and students to recognize the relevance of social emotional learning. The neural education approach certainly captured the hearts of the staff who

We care about students' hearts AND their brains!

“ Students need to know adults care for them and genuinely believe in their potential.”

have readily put their new learning into the classroom setting. It energized our learning environments and altered the way we do business in support of the social emotional needs of our students and staff.

**The Science of Social-Emotional Learning** is Steilacoom Historical School District's focus this year. Understanding the science behind why and how the brain is affected by stress, emotions, and trauma helps us develop ways to support students' mental health and well-being, which impacts both readiness to learn and long-term life outcomes. Research in human development, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience, and educational policy and practice has shown how social and emotional development is central to learning. Researchers have found that as children experience social emotional learning, the plasticity of the brain builds new neural networks,

Continued on page 18





which enable them to manage their emotional responses and engage their frontal cortex in rational decision-making.

## 'BRAIN CAMP'

This summer, our school district became the first district to be certified by Neural Education, the Institute for Connecting Neuroscience with Teaching and Learning. Over 75 of our district staff members have been trained to translate powerful neuroscience research into accessible classroom practices. We are excited to offer the staff institute (some like to call it "Brain Camp") again this summer for our continued professional learning around neural education and how it works in tandem with SEL development.

Our district has been deliberate about engaging parents in our SEL efforts. We have offered a series of parent workshops entitled, "Parenting Inside the Brain" to share the science of SEL. We have also hosted parent seminars on relevant SEL topics, like anxiety. Parent resources are created to communicate the work around the science of SEL, including a district calendar which highlights a different SEL concept every month. Our social media and weekly principal briefings have evolved with intentionality to create school connectedness for families. Parent SEL events have been very well attended and the SEL resources have created a momentum that is both energizing and productive in our efforts to support students.

## SEL IN THE CLASSROOM

When you visit our "neural educator" classrooms, you see structured learning environments with an intentional focus on relationship-building and activities geared towards cognitive restructuring, neuroplasticity, metacognition and co-regulation. Emotions are discussed and understood through a neural lens. You may hear a fourth-grader discuss "amygdala hijack" or



SEL environments intentionally focus on building relationships.



Parent SEL events have been very well attended and the SEL resources have created a momentum that is both energizing and productive in our efforts to support students."

visit a music classroom working to understand "working memory" and "mirror neurons."

You will see our district "facility dog," Aura, working in partnership with our physical therapist. Aura is a highly trained dog used to enhance the quality of education for students with disabilities and brings joy to the school setting while performing her duties as a facility dog.

I love visiting kindergarten classrooms who are using movement patterns in conjunction with reading, math and handwriting practice. These powerful classroom activities connect kinesthetics with increased engagement and learning, and you can feel the excitement as our students' serotonin increases and oxytocin is released! These meaningful learning activities are designed to challenge our students cognitively, while providing

positive social emotional learning outcomes, within an integrated SEL environment, rather than reliance on a specific curriculum.

We take a systematic, cognitive behavioral approach to learn emotional regulation, model positive mental health, and practice SEL development throughout our school day. These neuroscience findings belong in classrooms to maximize student achievement.

## OUR 'WHY'

SEL is alive and well in our schools and our initiative is based on scientific research, directly linked to student achievement. Why did we take this science approach to social emotional learning? We care about their hearts AND their brains. ■

# FUTURE EDUCATORS MONTH: A Tap on the Shoulder

Forward by  
**Scott Friedman**

*AWSP Associate Director*

Article by  
**Donald Larsen, Ph.D.**

*Professor, Education Administration Program, Western Washington University (Associate Professor, Western Washington University)*

**Joseph Hunter, Ed.D.**

*Associate Professor, Educational Administration, Western Washington University (Assistant Professor, Western Washington University)*

**James Everett**

*Superintendent, Meridian SD (Principal at Meridian High in Meridian SD)*

**Tarra Patrick**

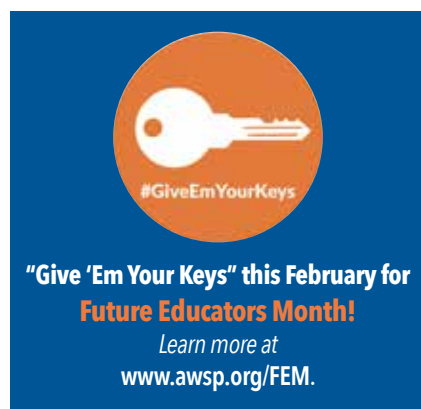
*Principal, Roxhill Elementary, Seattle PS (Principal at Totem Middle School in Marysville SD)*

**Kristen Sheridan**

*Director of Early Learning, Olympic ESD 114, (Principal at Sand Hill Elementary in North Mason SD)*

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Improving Instruction, Managing Resources*



**"Give 'Em Your Keys" this February for  
Future Educators Month!**  
Learn more at  
[www.awsp.org/FEM](http://www.awsp.org/FEM).

For the second year in a row, AWSP is declaring February **Future Educators Month** in Washington state. In honor of this promotion, we are bringing back a popular article from our winter 2015 issue of *Washington Principal*. Written by Don Larson and Joseph Hunter of Western Washington University, with commentary from principals James Everett, Tarra Patrick, and Kristen Sheridan, this article speaks to the importance of that "Tap on the Shoulder" to encourage future leaders to take the next steps in their education career. The titles next to the authors' names are current and the titles in the parentheses are their titles at the time the article was published in 2015.

AWSP is offering a Future School Leaders Day Workshop on Feb. 26 at the Four Points by Sheraton, Seattle Airport South. We hope that you will encourage a student or teacher to attend this valuable session on the field of education.

Learn more about our Future Educators Month promotion and Future School Leaders Day workshop at [www.awsp.org/FEM](http://www.awsp.org/FEM).

## There was a time

— not many years ago — when a district, upon announcing a principal vacancy, might expect to receive inquiries from dozens of eager, well-qualified applicants. In the second decade of the 21st century, after conducting a nationwide search, a district may receive a handful of applications. In some cases — particularly where a high school principal's position is open — the district may open and re-open the search two or three times before a satisfactory pool of applicants can be assembled.

So, in the current school climate that includes demands and mandates not imagined a generation ago, what might prompt an otherwise happy, fulfilled, successful teacher or ESA to make a transition to school administration?

Many of us who are principals or assistant principals, whether we have been in an administrative role for 20 years or two years, may recall a tap

on the shoulder from our principal or superintendent, giving us gentle encouragement to consider pursuing an educational administration program that would lead to principal certification. We might also recall that, until that moment, we had not contemplated such a career move; in fact, we may have bristled at the very thought of accepting a role on the "dark side" of the profession.

The principalship is, without a doubt, one of the most noble roles to which a professional educator can aspire. Research shows that the principal is the single greatest influence in shaping a school in which students flourish. As goes the principal, so goes the school.

## THREE PRINCIPALS REFLECT ON DEVELOPING LEADERS

We invited three Washington principals to reflect on what motivated them to seek a leadership

*Continued on page 20*

role in education. While all three offered insights about the upside aspects of the principalship, they also contemplated why a Washington principal might not offer the catalytic “tap on the shoulder.”



**James Everett,**  
*Superintendent,  
Meridian SD,  
(Formerly  
Principal at  
Meridian High)*

Upon completion of his principal

preparation program, James moved from assistant principal to principal in less than a year at Meridian High. His transition into school leadership was not the result of a sudden epiphany. Instead, over a period of time, while he remained in a classroom position, he had multiple opportunities to develop his leadership capacity while he kept the prospect of becoming a principal at arm’s length.

For James, the grain-of-sand-in-the-oyster moment that crystalized his aspirations came as a nudge from his superintendent.

“Five years into my teaching career, my then-superintendent had the ‘what are your long-term plans’ conversation with me in his office. He mentioned seeing promise in me and wanted me to know he would support me if I made a decision to pursue administration.”

Because he enjoyed the opportunities he found as a teacher and in other roles in his district, 10 years would elapse before James explored his options as a school administrator.

“I fought the urge for four or five years,” James recalls. “I was coaching. I was heavily involved in teaching adult technology courses in Washington and other states. I had a young family with two elementary-aged children. My time was limited, and I didn’t think there would be any flexibility to squeeze in an administration program, much less be able to afford it.”

“As practicing building principals, we have a vital responsibility to endorse and sponsor those who demonstrate promise in this field — and to encourage those who may be seeking an administrative role for inappropriate reasons to consider another avenue.”

Pushing James toward administration was a growing sense that, while he was enjoying success in the classroom, there might be a broader, more influential role in his future. He wanted to make a difference. “I had gotten to a point where I wanted to positively impact the educational system — and that still drives me today.”

James takes his responsibility to pay forward seriously in his role as principal. He is alert to those teachers who show the requisite spark of aptitude for leadership. Yet not everyone who aspires to become a principal is driven by motives to lead, inspire, and shape an effective teaching and learning community.

“I am wary of those seeking administration for a jump in salary — or who lack the desire to lead, fail to express interest in students and service, or rarely demonstrate a willingness to seek opportunities to grow programs and increase student achievement. I would encourage them to seek a different path. The future in educational administration must be filled by those who exhibit passion, desire, and leadership.”

James harbors no illusions about the challenges that inhabit the principal’s office. Mandates such as TPEP and Common Core require an administrator’s engagement. Over the past three years, he has overseen construction of a new high school on the same site where Meridian High School has stood since 1911. “There is no doubt about how demanding a building administrator’s role has become. In fact, it’s been challenging role for a long time, and yet incredibly satisfying.”

“There is not a lot of talk about the exciting, fulfilling parts of being a building administrator. They exist in the everyday, rewarding work with our students, families, and communities — but we are too often consumed with the fast pace of the here and now — while also preparing for what is coming next. We don’t take the time to reflect or share our successes — though doing so could help create a positive perception of the principalship.”

What responsibility does the principal hold for shaping the future of school administration? “The truth is that this work is too important to promote those who aren’t prepared or willing to put in the time and energy to lead well,” James said.

“As practicing building principals, we have a vital responsibility to endorse and sponsor those who demonstrate promise in this field — and to encourage those who may be seeking an administrative role for inappropriate reasons to consider another avenue.”



**Tarra Patrick,**  
*Principal, Roxhill  
Elementary,  
Seattle PS,  
(Formerly  
Principal at  
Totem Middle in  
Marysville SD)*

While many in our profession follow a career trajectory from undergraduate education to the classroom to the principalship, Tarra’s leadership journey began in the U.S. military. Yet education and educational leadership were deeply rooted in her thinking and aspirations, having been



“ I think that a person could be a very successful teacher, but not be in the right space to pursue administration. It would not be good for a person who desires power, sees the administrator/teacher relationship as adversarial, or is only looking for the pay increase.”

influenced by her mother, whose career in education included several leadership roles.

“My goal coming into education was always to work toward administration,” Tarra recalls. One of her early opportunities for leadership grew out of her role as a teacher on special assignment — a math TOSA. In her TOSA position, she was supporting teachers in all her district’s secondary schools. “I began to see the work of educating our students on a more global level; I started to see myself as being able to do the work of an administrator.” Finding the right “fit” was part of Tarra’s objective in becoming a school leader. “In order to have peace within, you have to have a job that allows you to work in alignment with your thinking.”

Like James, Tarra is not convinced that every good teacher should be encouraged to transition from the classroom to the principal’s office.

“I think that a person could be a very successful teacher, but not be in the right space to pursue administration. It would not be good for a person who desires power, sees the administrator/

teacher relationship as adversarial, or is only looking for the pay increase.”

But Tarra does not see being a gatekeeper as an appropriate role for the principal. “No one has the right to decide for someone else when they are ‘ready.’” Although there may be scenarios in which she would choose not to write a letter of reference for someone she believes has the wrong motivation or skill set to become a principal, “I would never position myself as a barrier to that person’s progress.”

Tarra acknowledges that there are “inside” and “outside” conversations about her role as principal.

“When I speak to people outside of administration, I talk about the positive aspects of the principal’s role. When I speak to fellow administrators or those who have been administrators, I talk about all the wacky situations, unhappy adults, and struggles of the job. I think we do this because, when we get together, we are often looking for support for the difficult work. We are looking to commiserate over the things we can’t share with other groups of people. Talking with successful administrators who have more experience shows me that these individual situations are not the sum of this experience.”

Tarra feels that a key role for the principal is to provide leadership opportunities for teachers, and to be available to support teachers as their skills as leaders emerge. In her estimation, though, the low-hanging fruit in principal development is likely to be found among assistant principals who are ready to make the next transition. “Most importantly, principals have a great duty to help APs become principals. It is our responsibility as principals that we create an environment where APs have the opportunity to develop building leadership skills.”



**Kristen Sheridan,**  
*Director, Early Learning, Olympic ESD, (Formerly Principal at Sand Hill Elementary in North Mason SD)*

Kristen’s passion for the classroom and effective pedagogy permeates her thoughts about school administration.

Before she seriously contemplated becoming a principal, she had opportunities as a teacher to take on leadership roles. “It felt good being able to make global and systemic changes to our school system,” she recalls. Like James, she was passionate about implementing strong, effective pedagogical practices in her own classroom, and she enjoyed sharing her successes and challenges with colleagues. However, she felt that her reach beyond her own classroom was limited. “I found that in an instructional leadership role I could make an impact on instructional practices beyond my classroom.”

Having a strong mentor to model effective leadership may be the ideal context in which an aspiring principal might develop the chops to embrace an expanded role in school leadership. But with several years’ experience in the principalship, Kristen is not naïve about survival in the role and the need to maintain a sense of balance. Reflecting on Dr. Seuss’s admonition that “life’s a great balancing act,” Kristen says, “The current demands of the principal’s role are quite large.”

She adds, “Balance is what you must do as a principal or assistant principal: balance the instructional leadership role with the management components of the job; balance the emotions of the staff, students, and parents; balance the schedule, the interventions, the extensions; balance implementation of curriculum,

*Continued on page 22*

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instruction, and assessment; and the list continues.”

The administrator’s job is fraught with demands that, Kristen believes, can be turned into exciting and fulfilling components of a principal’s role. “The grass is green where you water it. Although our roles are demanding, we must find those fulfilling moments.”

Do principals and assistant principals have a duty to encourage and mentor new leaders into the profession?

“Absolutely,” Kristen says. “Just as I was provided opportunities to take on leadership roles, it is equally my job to provide those opportunities to staff within my building.” Kristen welcomes the prospect that she might support a colleague who,

“ Reflecting on Dr. Seuss’s admonition that “life’s a great balancing act,” Kristen says, “The current demands of the principal’s role are quite large.”

like her, feels that pull toward the principalship.

### THE CHALLENGE

Each of these principals — James, Tarra, and Kristen — offers a different perspective on the role of the principal in identifying and supporting future educational leaders. A common thread emerges: as building administrators, we have a duty to encourage and support those who show promise as tomorrow’s Washington principals and assistant principals. They are not immune to the challenges that accompany their work, not least of

which are mandates from the state and national levels; but they — and you — are also in the best position to connect the dots between the budding leadership attributes a teacher or ESA may show and the door to the principalship that might be opened.

Who in your building is ready for that tap on the shoulder from you? ■



# FUTURE SCHOOL LEADERS DAY

*Exploring Your Future in Education*

## February 26, 2020 | SeaTac

AWSP’s Future School Leaders Day workshop lets teachers explore options for taking their career to the next level, and gives high school and college students information about the field of education. Attendees will hear from principals and teachers on why they chose the profession.

Learn more at [www.awsp.org/FSLD](http://www.awsp.org/FSLD)



# THE ABCs OF TELLING YOUR SCHOOL'S STORY

**Dr. Joe Sanfelippo**

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Managing Resources, Engaging Families and Communities*



**Editor's Note:** Dr. Joe Sanfelippo is the Superintendent of the Fall Creek School District in Fall Creek, WI. The Fall Creek School District was named an Innovative District in 2016 and 2017 by the International Center for Leadership in Education. Joe holds a BA in Elementary and Early

Childhood Education from St. Norbert College, a MS in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, a MS in Educational Leadership, and a PhD in Leadership, Learning, and Service from Cardinal Stritch University. Joe is also an adjunct professor in the Educational Leadership Department at Viterbo University. Joe has taught kindergarten, second and third grade. He was also a school counselor and high school coach prior to taking on an elementary principal position in 2005. He has served as a principal in suburban and rural Wisconsin.

Joe co-hosts the Successful Schools Podcast, and co-authored *The Power of Branding: Telling Your School's Story*, *Principal Professional Development: Leading Learning in a Digital Age* and *Hacking Leadership: 10 Ways Great Leaders Inspire Learning That Teachers, Students and Parents Love*. He was selected as 1 of 117 Future Ready Superintendents in 2014 and 1 of 50 Superintendents as a Personalized Learning Leader in 2016 by the US Department of Education. He attended summits at the White House for both distinctions. Joe has been a featured speaker in multiple states in the areas of Telling Your School Story, Advancing the Use of Social Media for School Leaders, Creating a Culture of Yes, and Personalized Professional Growth for Staff.

Dr. Joe Sanfelippo will be a keynote speaker at the 2020 AWSP/WASA Summer Conference! Learn more at [www.aws.org/SC20](http://www.aws.org/SC20).

**F**all Creek Wisconsin, population 1,355, is the home of the Fall Creek Crickets. Yes, that's the mascot: The mighty Crickets. We are also home to 825 storytellers in grades K-12. All of their stories have value, and it is our job to bring them to the world. We take an ABC approach to connecting to our community to help change the narrative of our school. To do this, it was important for us to find our Audience, Build our brand, and Celebrate kids.

### FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

According to [statista.com](http://statista.com), 78% of adults have a social media profile of some kind. As a district, we needed

“After surveying our community we found that adults preferred Facebook, students preferred Instagram, and alumni preferred Twitter. So, that is where we engage socially.”

to find where those profiles lived. After surveying our community we found that adults preferred Facebook, students preferred Instagram, and alumni preferred Twitter. So, that is where we engage socially. We don't have to be present in every social media platform, just the platforms that are relevant to our people. Once we found where people lived, we started engaging them online through social media contests. Here's a glimpse of what we did.

### THROWBACK THURSDAYS

Connecting to the community means valuing the world they lived in before they left school. We honor tradition by making those who came before us proud. Part of that is taking them along on the journey. Posting pictures from years gone by to a current social media platform helps connect the past to the present. All of those pictures come with a story. Start the story on

*Continued on page 24*



the platform and then allow people to contribute to it. A community telling a story is a powerful connection tool and celebrates everyone involved.

### WHAT IS THE VISION?

In the first two weeks after we started our social media presence, the response was not overwhelming. We had a few people follow our feeds on Twitter and Facebook, but the vast majority of people were not aware of our social media presence. That changes substantially when we started to have conversations about school, rather than posting what was happening. On a warm night in 2011, we engaged in our first interactive post on Facebook. The post was simple: “The first 5 people to find Dr. Sanfelippo at the football game tonight and tell him the vision of Fall Creek Schools will receive a t-shirt.” The response was phenomenal.

As I walked into the game, I saw kids running from across the field as fast as their little legs would carry them. They screamed, “We’re a community that works, learns, and succeeds together!” I handed out t-shirts to the first five people and had a wonderful time at the game, feeling great about the response to the post.

The following week we went through the same process. As I entered the game something different happened. Again, the kids came running as fast as they could, but I looked behind the kids and couldn’t believe what I saw. The adults were sprinting to get in front of the kids and they were screaming as they ran, “We’re a community that works, learns, and succeeds together!” People often want to be connected to a greater entity. When we are all carrying the flag it becomes lighter and our voice is much louder.



Dr. Joe Sanfelippo inspires school leaders to tell their story.

“ Putting the hashtag on apparel and giving it to the community at events built a tremendous amount of momentum for our district.”

### BUILD YOUR BRAND

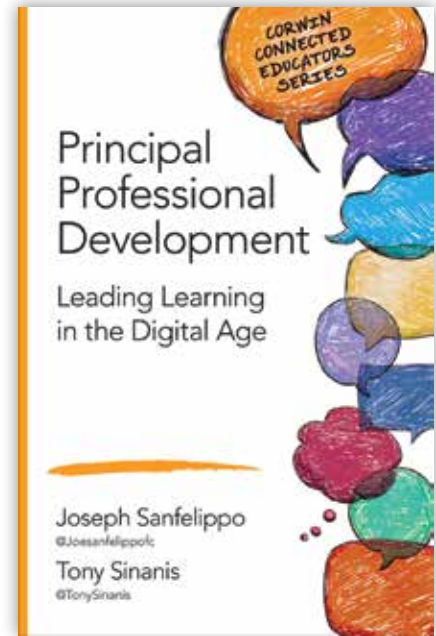
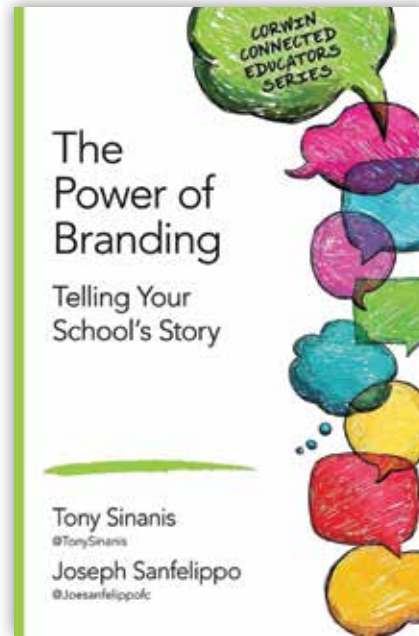
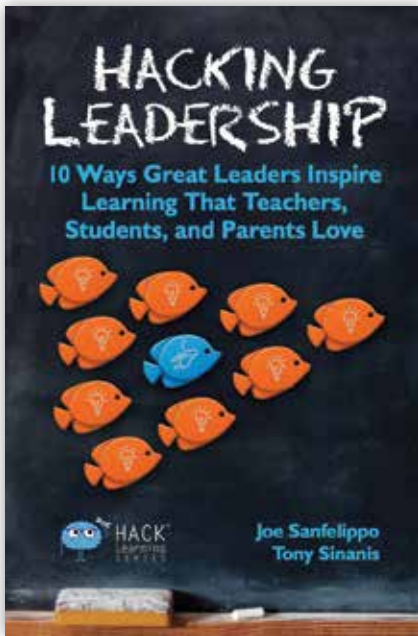
The term “brand” can definitely have a negative connotation, but we believe it is what people say about you when you are not there. Promoting the positives helps shape the narrative. Building our brand through a message or social media hashtag has helped us share the work of our kids in multiple areas. Putting the hashtag on apparel and giving it to the community at events built a tremendous amount of momentum for our district. We also added a “Where in the World is Fall Creek Pride” virtual map and told our community to take pictures in their Cricket gear on vacation so we can spread the message. It has allowed us to show off a #gocrickets item in all 50 states and beyond. We have tried

to turn those “Go Crickets” moments into a “Go Crickets” movement, and that movement makes our group feel like they can accomplish anything.

### LEVERAGE THE VOICE

Six of our teachers attended a conference in Orlando to present on a professional growth that put the ownership of learning on our staff. They developed the whole model, created ownership capacity with our teachers, and they were now being recognized as a District of Innovation by the International Center for Leadership in Education. They were excited to be there and share their stories with the world. What they were not prepared for was the response from those who attended the conference. As they walked through hallways and attended sessions, donning their Fall Creek t-shirts and backpacks, people at the conference would yell “Go Crickets!” at them on a regular basis. At first, they were a little alarmed, but after it happened a few times I saw one turn to a colleague, smile, and say, “they know us.”

The sense of pride they all felt at that moment helped me understand



Dr. Joe Sanfelippo is co-author of several books on storytelling and leadership.

that this movement was about much more than a mascot or a saying. It was about value...and on that day our people were valued. They started to send messages to their colleagues and tell them what was happening. When they returned to the school district we asked them to do their presentation for the board of education. As they finished their presentation one of the board members asked how their trip went. One member of the team looked at her colleagues, then at me, then to the board member and said, “We felt like rockstars.”

### CELEBRATE KIDS

The work done in our schools is amazing if you think about it. We educate ALL kids, we move them academically and emotionally, we provide a safe haven for those who need it, and celebrating that work should be at the forefront of what we do as school systems. As a board, we set a goal of seven to 10 non-athletic positive posts per week. Our community knows that space is to celebrate and we want everyone to join us on the journey.

We provide the opportunity to connect and through that connection, we develop a great deal of social capital with the people in our world. That social capital is pivotal for trust. A picture, video, or post can have a profound impact on emotions. The world has, and will always belong to the storytellers.

### TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY

We tend to talk about hope a lot. We have hope that the narrative of our schools will change. We hope people will tell great stories about the time they spent in our buildings. We hope when those that did not have a great experience provide their opinion someone will step in and talk about the positive aspects of their own experience.

Hope is great and we all need hope, but hope doesn't change narratives — the action does. We need to make a commitment to the kids, colleagues, and community members that put their heart and soul into the work to make the world a better place. I truly and honestly believe people want to celebrate the work that happens in

“ If we provide a sense of pride and understanding that our voice is stronger together, the narrative will change.”


schools, I just don't know if they have the context to do so. Our job is to provide the context and if we remain unapologetically optimistic about the work done in schools the narrative will change.

If we never give up the opportunity to say something great about the people who work with our kids and the work that those kids do, the narrative will change. If we provide a sense of pride and understanding that our voice is stronger together, the narrative will change. The world belongs to the storytellers and it is time to write ours. ■



# ELFISH ANTICS

## ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A photograph of three people dressed as elves in green and red outfits with striped leggings, sitting on a yellow tractor. They are holding large Christmas trees. The tractor has two large round headlights. The background is a wooden wall with a chain-link fence.

**Pleasant Valley Primary  
Uses “10 Days of Elfmas”  
and “Bedtime Stories”  
to Engage the Community**

**Craig Pearson**

*Principal, Pleasant Valley Primary  
School, Battleground PS*

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Engaging Families and Communities*



**W**hen I went through my master’s admin program, they forgot to cover how to dress up as an elf, make a fool of myself out in our community, and then post the evidence for 10 straight nights leading up to winter break for all to see.

So, you might be asking yourself right about now why on earth three competent school leaders would do this to themselves and why we’d allow someone to take up to 50 pictures in order to try and find 10 that are suitable to post on social media?

Thanks to an idea by our staff-led social media team this year, our assistant principal, our instructional coach and I found ourselves dressed up as elves and were “lost” in a variety of locations around our greater school community. Putting our shame aside, we went around to 10 different businesses within our community to take pictures which we later posted via social media. We “served” lunch at Burgerville, snuggled in a pet bed at a local pet store, used a froyo machine, drove a tractor at a local farm, drove Santa’s sleigh in a hot chocolate company’s storefront, and more.

### 10 DAYS OF ELFMAS

The 10 days leading up to our holiday break, we posted an elf picture taken at a different business within our community, many of which have supported our school in various ways over the years. After each picture

“ The 10 days leading up to our holiday break, we posted an elf picture taken at a different business within our community, many of which have supported our school in various ways over the years.”

was posted, families had to identify the location, go to the business, take a family selfie, and then reply using their picture on social media. We offered a commemorative ornament each day to the first family who posted their family selfie at the correct location, and then included all the other families who posted their picture in a final drawing at the end of the event. We felt this would be a fun way for our families to get out into our community, do something fun

as a family, and say thank you to the businesses by driving traffic through their doors.

At first, I was asking myself the same question because I do remember in my admin program being given stern lectures on the following topics — to think things through before making a decision, not to take on other people’s monkeys, and to remember that everything you do

*Continued on page 28*





is watched, scrutinized, and used to judge you as a basis for how you are performing as a leader. So, to answer your question, after thinking through this idea when it was presented to me, the only option I felt we had was to move forward because in my short time as a building administrator, the one thing I am sure of, is that students, staff, and families love when we step out of our normal routine as building leaders, break through our comfort zone, and do something that makes others view us as real people. Fortunately for the three elves involved in this social media event, our primary students (K-4) loved seeing us in the various locations, poses, facial expressions, and situations that made us, in that moment, more than school

leaders. Students were able to see us as individuals who, just like them, have a silly side and enjoy being themselves!

Beyond this, in a strange roundabout way, this campaign was a way to encourage our students and staff to take risks and do something without concern for the outcome, but rather because of the potential of the outcome. This is something that is regularly encouraged at Pleasant Valley Primary and is even spoken within our school motto: Be Kind, Work Hard, and Show Courage. In order to show courage, you have to be willing to take risks and step outside of your comfort zone. When the PVP elves did this, we built a stronger sense of community both within our school walls as well as connecting with community stakeholders.

The intended purpose of this event was to do something over the course of 10 days that would encourage our families to follow our three social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). We wanted to grow the connection and engagement with our families. We started sharing out cool things happening around our school, which included work and experiences by students as well as the hard work and energy that staff put in each and every day! What came of our social media efforts was so much more.

### BEDTIME STORIES

A second social media event our team implemented this year was an idea posed to them by Talea Jones, one of our third-grade teachers. We call it “Buddy the Beaver’s Bedtime Stories,” which we posted every Wednesday night via our school’s YouTube channel. Each week a staff member

BJ Rush (Instructional Coach), Craig Pearson (Principal), and Kara Kent (Assistant Principal) of Pleasant Valley Primary dress up as elves to engage the community on social media.





“ So far we have recorded stories in the school library’s rocking chair, our own homes with our own children tucked in, by living room fireplaces with our pets, and more.”

read their favorite bedtime story in their school-appropriate pajamas. To date, we recorded stories in the school library’s rocking chair, in our own homes with our own children tucked in, by living room fireplaces with our pets, and more.

By doing this, we let students into the lives of our many amazing staff members. Students get to see them not as their teacher or librarian, but rather as an individual who actually goes somewhere at the end of the day that doesn’t include the office, the staff room, the one and only faculty restroom, or the copy machine. I’m sure many of you have



Mrs. Brown, featured in this video, is one of our social media team members who creates and manages the bedtime stories for us.

had this experience: you see a student at the grocery store and they give you that look that says, “Wait, what are you doing at the grocery store? Shouldn’t you be at school?!”

Posting these bedtime stories allows us to break through that mindset and show students that we have homes, we have families, we even have a bed that we sleep in. We have pets, blankets, fireplaces, and other things similar to them in their lives

outside of their school day. Granted, we may not have Fortnite, Ninjago, or Minecraft, but you get the point! As crazy as this sounds, sharing a bedtime story with our students is honest and sincere and yet another way to connect with all 523 students we interact with every single day. When students can connect to us as individuals, we can strengthen those relationships and leverage them at school.

Our social media team (second-grade teacher Jessica Brown and third-grade teacher Camille Ingram) feels that sharing these stories each week promotes reading at home. Families can simply play the video and watch it together.

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Continued from page 29

Individual students can feel cared for by having a bedtime story read to them by a staff member, as many of our students don't have someone read stories to them at home. This unique experience is also a way to promote literacy. Hearing a fluent reader share a story is a great way for students to learn how to incorporate inflection and voice in their own reading.

## TAKE A CHANCE

As the principal at Pleasant Valley Primary, I consider myself blessed to be part of a caring, creative, and supportive group of staff that takes risks and pushes each one of us beyond what is comfortable in order to better serve students. I also enjoy learning each and every day how to best engage with our students, families, and community. Face-to-face engagement (open house, conferences, family nights) is critical, but online engagement can be equally important in order to help build culture and community as a school while sharing the story of who we are at Pleasant Valley Primary. This, the



social media engagement, is what I often ignored and honestly didn't give a chance until I got out of my own way and allowed staff to take it on. I would encourage you, as a building leader, to take risks, break through your comfort zone, and watch the

amazing connections that can take shape through this kind of activity. In the end, social media engagement will better serve your students, staff, and families to all help make your school a more enriching community. ■



## BE IN THE KNOW

Follow Pleasant Valley Primary on social media:



@PVCBeavers



PVCBeavers



@PVCBeavers



Link available on our Facebook page

School web page:  
[pvp.battlegroundps.org](http://pvp.battlegroundps.org)



**AWSP/WASA**



**S  
U M M E R  
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**20/20 VISION  
JUNE 28-30 | SPOKANE  
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**HAMISH BREWER | KRISTIN SOUERS |  
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**[WWW.AWSP.ORG/SC20](http://WWW.AWSP.ORG/SC20)**





# Kaiser's RISE Program

*Spokane Districts Among Early Adopters as Resilience in School Environments (RISE) Resources Now Available Nationwide at No Cost*

## **Jill Patnode**

*Kaiser Permanente Thriving Schools  
Program Manager  
Jill.Patnode@kp.org*

## **PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety,  
Engaging Families and Communities*

**A** recent survey found that 70 percent of teens think anxiety and depression is a “major problem” for their generation. Meanwhile, nearly half of K-12 teachers report daily stress levels rivaling those of nurses and physicians.

That’s why Kaiser Permanente, in partnership with Alliance for a Healthier Generation, is expanding the Resilience in School Environments (RISE) program to

address trauma and stress at more than 25,000 schools nationwide by 2023. Last fall, Spokane Public Schools and West Valley School District #363 were among the early adopters bringing RISE to life in our state.

RISE provides a comprehensive set of on-site and virtual resources, at no cost, for school staff, teachers and districts to mitigate the underlying factors of stress in schools and develop strategies and practices that foster more positive school environments. RISE has been piloted

in schools in California, Colorado, and Georgia since 2017.

“What initially interested me was the idea of staff well-being and taking care of teachers,” said Rachel Sherwood, principal at Bemiss Elementary in Spokane. “We have amazing teachers, but compassion fatigue and the vicarious trauma they experience from hearing our students’ stories makes it a very intense job. I want them to have their own buckets filled so they can give to students and continue to do the good work they do for a long time.”



“ We have amazing teachers, but compassion fatigue and the vicarious trauma they experience from hearing our students’ stories makes it a very intense job.”

Cicely White, MD, a Kaiser Permanente pediatrician in Spokane, said, “Just as I underscore the importance of self-care for the parents of the children I care for, it’s important that schools prioritize well-being for school teachers, staff, and administrators in order to be most effective in helping children learn and succeed.”

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – traumatic events that include abuse, neglect, or household dysfunction that can affect a child’s ability to flourish and function – are widespread. In the United States, 64 percent of children experience at least one ACE before the age of 18, and 13 percent experience four or more ACEs.

“Most of our students are living in highly stressful environments, and they bring that with them to school, along with an inability to regulate emotions, problem solve, or handle conflict,” said Sherwood. “Our

teachers are charged with the task of helping them learn, and also of trying to help them rewire some of their neurons so they can be calm and not hypervigilant about what might be stressful or scary around them.”

### ASSESSING STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

RISE isn’t a one-size-fits-all initiative. Participating schools start by answering questions in the RISE Index, a digital tool assessing what each school or district is doing well and where they can make positive changes to their policies, practices, and environments.

After completing this initial assessment, schools can choose from a variety of offerings that best suit their needs, including on-site coaching by program managers, customized virtual tools, and other online learning modules. As of November 2019, more than 500 schools have started the RISE Index



Rachel Sherwood, principal of Bemiss Elementary in Spokane is committed to promoting mental health among her staff and students.

and more than 100 have started a RISE Action Plan to help guide their activities.

“We learned from the RISE Index that there are a lot of things we’re already doing well,” said Sherwood. “Our teachers are well-trained in trauma-informed practices and attachment theory, for example. But one thing I’d like to focus on is improving the physical environment of our school, to make it feel warmer and less institutional, so both students and staff feel good when they enter the building.”

“For over a decade Healthier Generation and Kaiser Permanente have partnered to help schools create sustainable, meaningful improvements to health and wellness,” said Melissa Carpenter, RISE program manager at Healthier Generation. “Through RISE, we’re extending that support to enable schools to meet the health needs of the whole child, while fostering happier, healthier staff in the process.” ■

Learn more:

[www.healthiergeneration.org/RISE](http://www.healthiergeneration.org/RISE)



Kaiser Permanente pediatrician Cicely White, MD (L) and KP Thriving Schools Program Manager Jill Patnode (center) talk with Principal Rachel Sherwood about plans for bringing RISE resources to Bemiss Elementary.

# What if?

## *Regrets and Lessons from a School Shooter*



**Alison Olzendam**

AWSP New Principal Mentor; Washington State Leadership Academy Instructor

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety*

What if all students were connected to an adult? What if all students were committed to keeping friends safe? What if all guns were secure? What difference might it make? **It would save lives and heartache.**

### A STUDENT PROFILE

Picture a 14 year old boy in your school. He is quiet, in advanced classes but not a high achiever. He rarely makes eye contact. You notice him as he passes in the hallway. What you don't know is that he has not connected with one adult in his junior high school. Not one. He also doesn't have siblings at home, or any relatives that live in his town — they live thousands of miles away. His parents are separated, he lives with mom and she is suicidal, often confiding in him about her suicidal thoughts. There are several unsecured guns in the home. He shares dark thoughts with friends, and even asks one where he can get ammunition for a gun. None of the friends share this with an adult. His father lives in another town with his girlfriend. This boy is literally on his own.

He is required to attend a school dance the last afternoon before Christmas. He is with a friend, standing to the side of the cafeteria. His friend gets asked to dance by a girl. He tells himself he will never get asked to dance; he is a loser and

“ This could have been one of my students in the many years I served as a principal. Is it one of yours as well?”

always will be. This incident starts a downward spiral for him and there is no one to stop it.

This could have been one of my students in the many years I served as a principal. Is it one of yours as well?

Several months later this boy, Barry Loukaitis, opened fire in a classroom in Frontier Junior High in Moses Lake. The harm he did that day was in his words, “irreparable.” And he is correct.

### SANDY HOOK PROMISE

Anyone who has suffered a tragic loss endures great, long-lasting pain. I have two nephews who were directly affected by the school shooting at Freeman High School outside of Spokane. I also am the leadership coach for the Freeman School

District. Having seen up close the devastation to everyone involved I felt I had to do more than just feel badly. I decided to act. I began contributing to Sandy Hook Promise. If you have not reviewed their materials I encourage you to do so. At [www.sandyhookpromise.com](http://www.sandyhookpromise.com), you will find five research-based programs and practices. The curriculum is yours to use.

While you probably have similar programs, check these out to see if there is anything to add to what you have, to be sure a comprehensive approach to school safety is in place. If you don't have similar programs, then start — now. The materials are very well done and easy to implement for busy principals. From what Barry has told me, these programs would have made a difference for him.

I also wondered what could be learned from a perpetrator who survived the incident. I was curious if anyone had ever talked to a school shooter who had survived, and what would they say with the benefit of years of reflection and added maturity?



## SHARING HIS STORY

I had read Barry Loukaitis had expressed deep remorse to the loved ones at a recent hearing. Would he have advice that might be a deterrent? I know students listen when the words come from a place of credibility. I shared my thoughts with Barry Loukaitis, who has had 22 years in prison to think about his actions. No, he had never been asked.

Barry agreed to share his story, but only with the understanding that it not be sensationalized, and that it be solely to prevent another family from experiencing the life-shattering trauma a shooting brings to loved ones. He was reluctant at first, out of concern and respect for the loved ones of his victims.

As I think back to my days as a principal, three areas emerged as most important from my conversations with Barry, and would have been helpful as I thought about keeping our school safe.

**First, can you say with confidence every student in your school is connected to an adult?** If not, start the process. Teachers will be more than willing to help when they understand the importance of these connections.

**Second, do students know how to safely and easily share concerns about a friend?** I asked Barry if his friends would have been able to change his plans. His response: “Totally.” As with other incidents, the signs were there. According to Sandy Hook Promise research, four out of five school shooters give you the power to stop them. And do friends understand they are saving their friends, possibly their life and certainly their future?

**Third, do parents understand that they must secure guns in their homes?** Are parents aware of the legislation that took effect July 1? Gun owners can be charged under a crime of community endangerment



First, can you say with confidence every student in your school is connected to an adult? If not, start the process.”

if someone not allowed to have a firearm, such as a child, gains access to it and shows it publicly, shoots it, or uses it in a crime. And do they know without any doubt that they are secure? I asked Barry about the guns in his house. What if there hadn't been guns? He replied, “I maybe would have taken a knife to school, but that's it.”

And if you are talking to a student who has thoughts about violence, have them read them Barry's words. He knows what he is talking about. He will spend the rest of his life in prison. Barry and I are hopeful that his message, perhaps shared in a threat assessment with a student or other conversation, could change the actions of a potential shooter, or convince a friend to come forward with information.

## BARRY'S OWN WORDS

I believe Barry's words are more powerful than anything I could ever convey to students:

*“It will not happen as you envision. You'll imagine revenge, retribution. A sense of justice. All you'll feel is horror and shame. There's nothing cool about it. People won't fear or admire you. They'll feel only the contempt and disgust normally reserved for an inveterate child molester, and they'll be right. You won't be hard, respected, or feared. There's a sickness to what you've done, a twisted revulsion you will feel all the time. You will never forget it. Nor will anyone else.*

*You will regret it. If you take away nothing else, remember that. There's a common thread among all of us who've hurt others. We wish we could take it back. That alone should be proof enough that it's a bad idea. We know what the aftermath is like, and none of us sits around gloating about it. All we wish for is a time machine.*

*Maybe you think you have nothing else in your life, so you may as well take others down with you. I promise you, you're wrong. When you've destroyed other's lives and wrecked your own, you discover very quickly that you took a lot of good things for granted. You will definitely miss those things. Yes, you will lose every material thing you care about. You will lose freedom, and will spend the rest of your life following other people's orders. (You think you're already doing that now? Trust me, it can get much worse.) I'm sure you expect that. What you don't expect is missing other things. One of those things is self-respect. Another is innocence. You will miss being innocent. You will miss being able to look at yourself in a mirror and see a person, someone who has rights, someone who deserves something. You will miss having a soul. That is what you truly give up.*

*There is no coming back from this. It will never, ever go away. It's there every time you look in the mirror, every time you think you can enjoy yourself. You will become a thousand times worse than anyone you claim to despise. Some people are jerks? You are a bigger one. Some are losers? You live off tax money. Do others lack honor? You hurt a bunch of children. That will be your legacy, and it will be the best you can hope for.*

*If you hold on, you're going to be okay. I promise you, the life you want is out there for you.”*

— Barry Loukaitis

It is Barry's hope, and mine, that his story might be used to help prevent another tragedy. Principals, you will know the best way to use his story.

Thank you for all you do, every day, to keep students safe, healthy, and achieving. ■

# Inclusive Classrooms

## Do You Believe, or Are You Checking the Box?

**Brent Osborn**

Principal, Lakeside High School,  
Nine Mile Falls SD

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Improving Instruction,  
Planning with Data, Engaging Families and  
Communities, Closing the Gap*



Our state has increased its focus on inclusive teaching practices and ensuring students have a rich educational experience in all of our classrooms. It is critical that we, as school leaders, provide the necessary support to make inclusive education beneficial for all students and staff. To do that we need to have a clear “why” established within and through our systems, we need to be intentional in preparation and planning, and we need to keep the students’ needs at the forefront.

You do not have to look hard or far to find primary source literature for the support of inclusive classrooms.

“Providing classrooms that accept diversity and differences helps all learners grow. In addition, placing our most highly qualified teachers, and specialized content, in front of all students is good practice.”

The research is clear that the least restrictive environment (LRE) best serves students in their education. Providing classrooms that accept diversity and differences helps all learners grow. In addition, placing our most highly qualified teachers, and specialized content, in front of all students is good practice. Lastly, promoting positive peer relationships between all students facilitates social and emotional development.

### INCLUSION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

Lakeside High is a comprehensive high school of approximately 450 students with 15% special education. We engaged in professional growth on trauma-informed teaching practices, special education modifications and accommodations, and have an MTSS model for student intervention. In our school, 75% of students are in LRE level 1, 15% LRE level 2, and 10% LRE level 3.



A whole-school inclusion model requires an intentional investment in teacher professional growth. Either before or alongside your walk toward inclusion, we would strongly recommend work on trauma-informed teaching practices and continued work with your teams on successful strategies through your MTSS intervention model. Investing focused time helping staff understand high leverage strategies in modifications and accommodations and the differences between them.

An accommodation changes how a student learns, and a modification changes what is taught or what they are expected to understand. This is where you can incorporate both teacher leaders and special education teachers in showing quality examples of what personalized education can look like with only small changes in practice. When partnership is done

“When partnership is done well between special education staff and general education teachers, a teacher’s workload does not change.”

well between special education staff and general education teachers, a teacher’s workload does not change. This work very easily mirrors most all schools’ professional growth plans and school improvement processes. It is important this work be intentional and well planned, and all teachers engage in the process. Inclusive classrooms require supports for students and staff; take care of your adults, as well.

### A TEAM APPROACH

Bring everyone to the table as you increase your classroom inclusion. It starts with involving all stakeholders in your school leadership structure. For example, at Lakeside, we would

have some professional growth time with our Teacher Leadership team to build the “why,” which would lead to development of a professional growth plan for all staff, both certified and classified. We would then work with the special education team on directed learning and student needs. Next, we would work side-by-side with counseling on master schedule development to facilitate classroom inclusion. Finally, and most importantly, we would engage in meaningful conversation with families around student IEPs and how we can partner in providing a quality inclusive education for their students.

Remember why we are promoting inclusive education — it is about individual student success. Do not sacrifice what is best for a student for a higher percentage of LRE level 1 (full inclusion). Each student’s plan should be created for their success. If LRE level 2 is a better option for their growth, then that is what it needs to be in that moment. Inclusion is the goal and is our goal for all of our students, but be fluid and evaluative of your program. Evaluate your program on a student-by-student basis, not a percentage. ■

## STEPS TO QUALITY CLASSROOM INCLUSION

1. Establish a clear “why” with your staff? for your staff? Provide professional learning time on the importance of the work.
2. Be intentional with your professional growth opportunities.
  - a. Use teacher leaders and special education leaders together.
  - b. Make sure it’s well planned and teachers have continued supports.
  - c. Partner your learning with trauma education and your MTSS model.
3. Involve your stakeholders. Don’t forget the families!
4. Keep the focus on the individual students, not overall numbers.

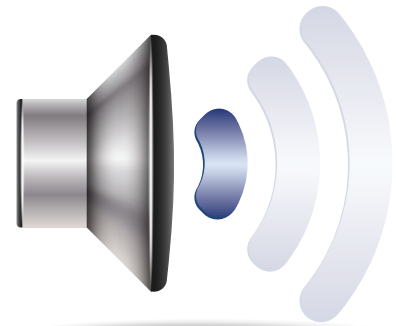
## TURN UP THE VOLUME!

**Jack Arend**Associate Director,  
AWSP

Students want to talk to **YOU!** They want to share their ideas, their needs, their stories and their dreams. They deeply desire to know their voice matters in all aspects of the school, beyond the theme for the next dance or what the reward will be when a fundraising goal is reached. Most importantly, they desire to have a connection with each and every adult in the building, especially **YOU** and your building leadership team.

At our recent AWSP professional learning event, *Launching Principal Leadership and Building Effective Leadership*, we invited a student panel to share their thoughts and perspectives on student voice. What happened during these sessions was truly amazing!

As the student panel began sharing responses to our prompts, I noticed laptops started to close, phones were turned off and one by one, the building leaders began to lean forward and move to the front of their chair. Students from Sumner High, Harrison Prep, Renton High and Kent-Meridian High were able to share simple things every principal could do to experience the power and impact of student voice in their building. What follows are the three prompts we used and a few of the panel responses:

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA***Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety***QUESTION #1: WHAT MAKES A GREAT PRINCIPAL?****“Make time for the students.”**

The students all shared how much they appreciate when a building leader stops what they are doing and spends time with students. Put down the clipboard, cell phone or radio and connect with the students.

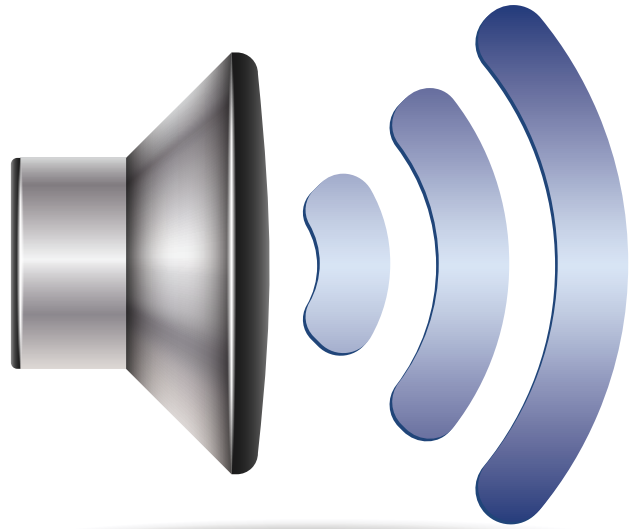
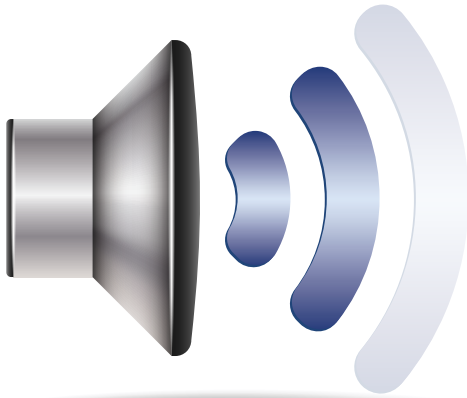
**“Know the names of your students.”**

“When my principal greets me by name, it is more than polite or nice, it is proof they actually care about me.” Each student commented on the powerful impact when their building principal or assistant principal called them by their name. They all acknowledged what a huge job this can be for leaders and the significance of the message it sends to the entire student body.

**“Be cohesive with your staff.”**

Our panel shared it is quite noticeable to students if the principal and/or leadership team does not connect with the entire staff. They shared how much they enjoy hearing positive comments about the staff from their principal. What a great reminder that the students in our building hang onto every word we say, even if we think they are not listening.





“As the student panel began sharing responses to our prompts, I noticed laptops started to close, phones were turned off and one by one, the building leaders began to lean forward and move to the front of their chair.”

### QUESTION #2: WHERE DO YOU FEEL STUDENT VOICE COULD BETTER BE USED IN YOUR SCHOOL?

**“Ask what your students need to feel safe at school.”** Students want to be involved with decisions around physical and emotional safety at their school. I wonder how student perception of emergency drills and procedures would help to influence the school safety plan? Do you have students on your safety committee?

**“Ask your student body how they view their school.”** One panelist shared that principals might be pleasantly surprised with how kids view their school, but shared they are rarely asked to provide input on what they like about their school and what they wish was different.

**“Hold a Student Union or Town Hall Meeting and let the students share what is on their mind. No agenda, just ask us how we are doing, or what we think we might need to be successful.”** Think of the questions you could ask and the

information you could receive in this type of setting. The feedback from the students in your school, regardless of age, could be very powerful and informative for you and your leadership. What a great way to provide space for student voice to be heard in your school.

### QUESTION #3: I WISH MY PRINCIPAL KNEW...

**“We care... a lot!”**

**“Being a student is just one of the many titles we have.”** (Students are involved in clubs, hobbies, sports, musicians, jobs, tutoring, etc.)

**“How we are doing... really! We want to tell you!”**

Students want to have a relationship with all the adults in the building, and that includes the building leaders.

**“We want to be treated like more than just a number. We are more than our test scores.”**

Once you allow the volume to be turned up on student voice, there is no limit to the positive impact it can have on your school and your leadership. Students want to join with you to improve their school and are eagerly waiting for their voice to be heard. At the end of the day it is not about test scores, SMART goals, or budgets, but about whether you have listened to, learned from, and led with your students. ■



# PUTTING STUDENTS IN PLACES OF OPPORTUNITY

## New AWSL goals align with AWSP Framework, state learning standards

**James Layman**

Program Director, Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL)

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Closing the Gap*

**“Principals learning from the very people they chose their career for is an insightful, impactful experience that allows a personal connection for every principal and students. This is the moment a student can teach a teacher.”**

— Lafayette Jones (Junior, Renton HS)

In the fall of 2018, a group of educators, AWSL Staff, and stakeholders came together to discuss equity, opportunity, and access as it relates to all aspects of student leadership in our state. One of the big accomplishments was updating our goals and objectives to align with the AWSP Leadership Framework, and with the Washington State Social Emotional Learning Standards.

Using this new document to guide our work, our AWSL Student Voice and Advocacy Board implemented these goals:

- Increase the opportunities, resources, and support for all students to lead in their communities.
- Develop a system where multiple perspectives are sought and utilized to make decisions for the community.

Representing the nine Educational Service Districts in the state from 17 high schools, the Student Voice and Advocacy Board got right to work in developing the plan to serve as advocates and ambassadors for the one million K-12 students in our Washington state school system.

Since the beginning of the year, we worked diligently to put these students in places of opportunity in order to share their stories and experiences with principals and stakeholders in our school system. The results have been powerful – as we allowed these students placed in opportunities to become educators.

Through our collaborative efforts with AWSP, the Student Voice and Advocacy Board presented at the Launching Principal Leadership Network and Building Effective Leadership Network workshops. Using our updated direction of training and empowering (all) students to lead, these opportunities were transformational.

**“Being able to share my voice with a room of administrators who were attentive, polite, and who genuinely cared about what we had to say gave me hope for the future of education.”**

– Sophia Wasson (Senior, Sumner HS)

With the infusion of the state’s Social Emotional Learning Standards in our goals and objectives, we now can live our mission more fully – to support and increase the academic and social success of all students. We also believe and have evidence that through our intentionality, the opportunities we provide students to lead has brought on a self-awareness awakening, where students are able to explore their stories and aspirations. We are optimistic Washington students become advocates and standard-bearers of hope as we collectively work to diversify the education workforce through the state’s incredibly talented students.

**“Being able to advocate for not only my experience as a student, but for others as well, was truly a remarkable experience. I saw that the principals were engaged in what we shared and how we were able to capture student perspective. I definitely believe that all the principals took something away that will have a positive impact on their school environments, creating fun and safe atmospheres for all students.”**

– Dante Ost (Senior, Harrison Preparatory School)



AWSL Goals and Objectives using language from Washington State Social Emotional Learning Standards	AWSP Leadership Framework Criteria
<p><b>Self-Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through one’s story, understand strengths, areas of growth, biases and privilege.</li> </ul>	<p>Creating a Culture, Ensuring Safety, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap</p>
<p><b>Social Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase understanding of the power of words as it relates to microaggressions, biased language, sarcasm and humor.</li> <li>• Practice strategies that promote respect and acceptance in regard to multiple perspectives.</li> <li>• Recognize how people’s stories and experiences have shaped their identity.</li> </ul>	<p>Creating a Culture, Ensuring Safety, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap</p>
<p><b>Self-Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define and recognize individual needs and triggers as it pertains to coping skills, self-care, stress, etc.</li> <li>• Identify and practice strategies for self-management.</li> <li>• Develop the ability to listen for understanding without the need to respond.</li> <li>• Understand and value different leadership styles and their effectiveness in different settings.</li> </ul>	<p>Ensuring School Safety, Planning with Data, Engaging Families and Communities, Managing Resources, Closing the Gap, Creating a Culture</p>
<p><b>Social Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and understand group processes and dynamics, especially in regard to the diversity of the group.</li> <li>• Learn and practice techniques for building and strengthening relationships.</li> <li>• Learn and practice techniques for resolving conflicts and repairing relationships.</li> <li>• Engage in constructive conversations while valuing the dignity of all participants.</li> <li>• Learn techniques and skills to advocate for self and others.</li> </ul>	<p>Managing Resources, Closing the Gap, Creating a Culture, Engaging Families and Communities, Ensuring School Safety, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction</p>
<p><b>Self-Efficacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice shared responsibility and accountability.</li> <li>• Initiate, generate, and evaluate goals.</li> <li>• Believe, identify, and utilize the value of one’s experiences, talents, skills, and interests as assets and resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Managing Resources, Creating a Culture, Closing the Gap, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities, Planning with Data</p>
<p><b>Social Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize essential project planning strategies for organizing school activities and events that reflect the cultures and interests of everyone on campus.</li> <li>• Increase the opportunities, resources, and support for all students to lead.</li> <li>• Utilize school demographics as an essential tool to interpret data to create a positive culture and climate.</li> <li>• Develop a system where multiple perspectives are sought and utilized to make decisions.</li> </ul>	<p>Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Ensuring School Safety, Closing the Gap, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities</p>

# 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

## Lawmakers challenged to address many issues in short legislative session

### Roz Thompson

Advocacy and Governmental Relations  
Director, AWSP

#### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Planning with Data, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Managing Resources, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap*

**T**he 2020 legislative session is a short, 60-day session that will hopefully end in mid-March. It is projected to be a very modest session in terms of any new spending. According to Rep. Pat

Sullivan, the House Majority Leader, the intent is to “make any budget adjustments for emergent needs.” With the passage of I-976, one of the emergent needs is the gap in transportation spending. But we also know there are still significant funding needs in our school buildings and districts related to special education, mental health support for students, and the additional health care costs related to the School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB).

We hope this session will be modest in terms of any new education policy because we know principals are overwhelmed with policy from the past 10 years and our school systems need a chance to adapt to recent changes like discipline rules and graduation requirements.

After months of conversation with principals across our state, including our AWSP Executive Board and our AWSP Advocacy Advisory Council, we completed our legislative platform (see graphic) for 2020. Our goal is to highlight the specific needs of principals and assistant principals and to continue the conversation about policy and budget needs

both immediately and into the next biennium. Since most all education policy affects the work of principals, we will be weighing in on many more issues besides those listed here.

#### STUDENT SUPPORT

We purposely highlighted the largest circle in this year’s platform as support for students since they rely on us each and every day. The Legislature should support the student mental health resolution passed by the State Board of Education, which includes additional training and education around mental health and an increase in psychologists, counselors, and mental health professionals. In conjunction with the Children’s Mental Health Workgroup, we also support the definition of an MTSS framework, additional positions at ESDs for school safety coordinators, and increased coordination of health centers in schools.

#### QUALITY WORKFORCE

In this section, we spoke to the very important progression that someone takes as they move through the principalship. We need to restore funding for the intern grant program, increase funding for principal mentors, and support state funded professional development for student academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs. Our board and council also felt that it was important

to push the Legislature to define teacher duties and expectations. We will work closely with the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) on this issue.

#### AMPLE & EQUITABLE FUNDING

In our work with OSPI’s Staffing Enrichments Workgroup, we created broad awareness and understanding that the work of principals is becoming unsustainable. We made the case the allocation for principals and assistant principals in the prototypical school model needed to be increased. In their final report, the Workgroup recommended a ratio of students to principals, assistant principals, or other school level administrators of 300:1. This would be an improvement over the current ratio which is 319:1. Over the next six years, the Workgroup recommended that the ratio move to 260:1.

Here is an excerpt from our letter to OSPI:

*The data is clear and compelling. We must change the way the principal position is staffed and ensure a proper number of school leaders are hired to do the work. It has become abundantly clear we have a systems-problem being placed on the backs of individuals. Simply put, the prototypical funding model does not provide an adequate number of principals.*



# 2020 AWSP LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

## Student Support

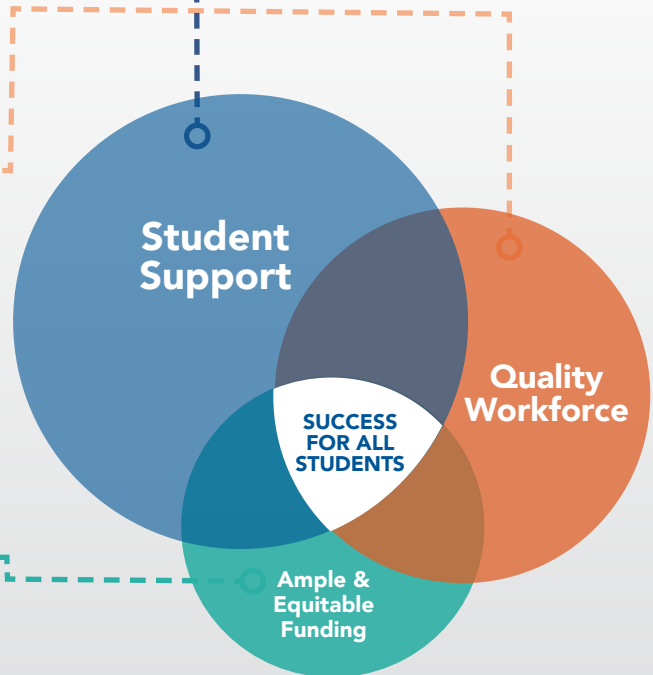
- Support the student mental health resolution from the State Board of Education.
- Support the definition of an MTSS framework for schools, additional positions at ESDs for school safety coordination, and increased coordination of health centers in schools.

## Quality Workforce

- Restore funding for administrative internships and increase funding for principal mentorships in order to support principal effectiveness and longevity.
- Provide additional state funded professional learning days, resources, and supports for student academic, behavioral, and social emotional needs.
- Provide suicide prevention and mental health training for staff and students.
- Define the minimum professional duties and expectations for teachers.

## Ample & Equitable Funding

- Increase the salary allocation for principals and assistant principals in order to attract and retain high quality educators to the principalship.
- Increase the allocation of principals and assistant principals in the prototypical school funding model to support sustained leadership and provide relief from the currently unsustainable workload.
- Update the staffing allocation formula to provide additional social emotional support staff (school counselors, school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and parent involvement coordinators).



*It is critical to understand that, in addition to the student-to-principal ratio, the staff-to-principal ratio has a profound effect on a principal's workload and contributes to the survey data referenced above. Likewise, categorical programs such as LAP and ELL directly influence a principal's opportunity to impact teaching and learning. Therefore, AWSP also strongly recommends the following improvements in order to provide equitable and sustained*

*leadership and support to all students and staff:*

- *Principal FTE should increase at the same percentage-rate as staff FTE.*
- *A portion of LAP and ELL funding should be dedicated to increasing principal FTE.*

We think that being a principal is the best job in the world and we know that it is one of the most challenging.

We will continue sharing your stories with policymakers here in Olympia and around the state and hope you can make some time to do so as well. There are all kinds of ways to advocate — from sending emails to following action alerts online to calling or meeting with legislators. We urge you to get involved and to contact us if you have any questions or comments. ■



# The Evidence Says: Relationships, Relationships, Relationships

## Positive Adult Relationships are Critical to Student Success

### Mark McKechnie, MSW

Senior Consultant in Equity in Student Discipline, OSPI

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Engaging Families and Communities, Closing the Gap*

In a number of fields, including medicine, mental health, and education, positive relationships between professionals and those they serve are connected to positive outcomes. Within education, positive relationships are at the core of a number of evidence-based, research-based, and promising practices, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Restorative Practices, Social-Emotional Learning, Trauma-Informed Practices, and Culturally-Responsive Teaching.

In other words, positive relationships go a long way toward supporting the most desired outcomes in our schools, including positive culture and climate, safety, and academic achievement. Within the first month or two of school, these relationships are formed with many students. It is also an important time to focus on the students who still lack these positive adult relationships.

We all tend to gravitate more towards some people than others. They may be people with similar interests, similar personalities and, often, similar

values, beliefs and cultures. This is one manifestation of implicit bias, which we all experience.

For teachers and other staff who work with students in a public school setting, it may require focus and effort to build meaningful relationships with each and every student. When staff come from different cultures and backgrounds than their students, developing meaningful relationships may be a little more challenging, but it is all the more important.



“ The practice of forming positive relationships is not ‘one more thing’ — rather, it is at the core of effective educational practices.”

All students need to feel that their teachers and other important adults understand them, support them, and are engaged in their success and helping them reach their full potential as people. The practice of forming positive relationships is not “one more thing” — rather, it is at the core of effective educational practices.

Zaretta Hammond writes in *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* about “learning partnerships” as “a teacher-student relationship in which the teacher builds trust and becomes a student’s ally in order to help the student reach a higher level of achievement” (p. 156). These relationships, she says, support the development of students’ brains by strengthening relationships

through the release of dopamine (a neurotransmitter) and the building and shaping of neural pathways that support increasingly complex learning.

Dr. Hammond describes the role of the teacher as a “Warm Demander,” who:

- Shows personal interest in students by inquiring about people and events that are important in their lives.
- Has an explicit focus on building rapport and trust, expressing warmth through smiling, warm or firm tone of voice, and good-natured teasing.
- Earns the right to demand each student’s engagement and effort.

- Holds high standards, offers emotional support, and provides instructional scaffolding (p. 99).

These aspects could describe trauma-informed teaching, as well. The result is adults are viewed by students as caring, and they help to put a positive spin on students’ challenges, rather than making them appear combative or disheartening. Regardless of the curricula or behavioral approaches a school or district may select, these types of positive relationships should be at the core of them.

Forming positive relationships early in the school year will pay dividends throughout. PBIS or other building teams can be strategic, intentional, and methodical about identifying the students who may lack positive relationships so teachers and other staff dedicate their time and effort to build them with each and every student. ■

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# Highs and Lows

## Experiential Education through AWSP's Outdoor Learning Centers

**Chase Buffington**

*Cispus Learning Center Director, AWSL*

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Improving Instruction, Engaging Families and Communities*

In all walks of life, for every human being, we are exposed to challenges every day. Each of us meets these challenges a little differently, at a pace that is unique to us. This is the shared human experience that makes us both individuals, as well as members of a community.

Now, where does this come into play when we speak about outdoor learning centers? Being immersed in the great unknown, surrounded by wilderness and the beauty of

“Being immersed in the great unknown, surrounded by wilderness and the beauty of Mother Nature is enough to cause anyone’s imagination to ignite.”

Mother Nature is enough to cause anyone’s imagination to ignite! Even at night, when the things you can’t see may inspire fear and uncertainty, nature still has ways to help you manage inner anxieties and self-doubt.

I’d be willing to bet most first year educators would describe at least a few of these feelings when remembering their first day of teaching! As outdoor educators, we experience all of these emotions too. Every time we approach a group of students standing in an open field, our minds start to wonder, “Where will we lead them?” “What will they learn?”







“ Experiential education, in an outdoor setting, can be a rejuvenating experience. It presents a method of perceived risk and to some degree (much like life), allows for failures.”

in mind throughout the day is each participant comes from a different walk of life. We believe discovery and authenticity in one’s actions is the driving force in building compassion for others.

**Kindness** — the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. We aim to help students see the benefit in expressing kindness to others and also to themselves.

**Humility** — a modest view of one’s own importance; humbleness. We believe the ability to admit when you are wrong and ask for help when it’s needed are important skills each student deserves to learn.

**Gentleness** — the quality of being kind, tender, or mild-mannered. Gentleness allows us to listen and gain trust in others.

**Patience** — the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset. We believe patience is an extremely valuable skill to have in today’s fast paced world. Patience allows us to move through life more comfortably.

These are the goals of outdoor learning centers. We work hard to provide not only the space where this vital learning can occur, but also staff who are educated and passionate about connecting students with the great outdoors, their community, and themselves.



If you would like to get more information on a traveling challenges program or get some information about our low and high initiatives here at Cispus or Chewelah Peak Learning Center, please go to [www.awsplearningcenters.org](http://www.awsplearningcenters.org). While you’re at it, check out the Cispus and Chewelah Peak videos on the AWSP YouTube channel. ■



“Will the outcome be beneficial?”

Experiential education, in an outdoor setting, can be a rejuvenating experience. It presents a method of perceived risk and to some degree (much like life), allows for failures. The goal we wish to highlight in those moments of failure is to learn from the mistake, rather than dwell on it. Through careful exploration of situations and feelings, we hope to empower students to be their most authentic self within their larger community.

Our programs focus on topics such as:

**Compassion** — sympathy and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others. As facilitators in the outdoors, we acknowledge this. What we keep





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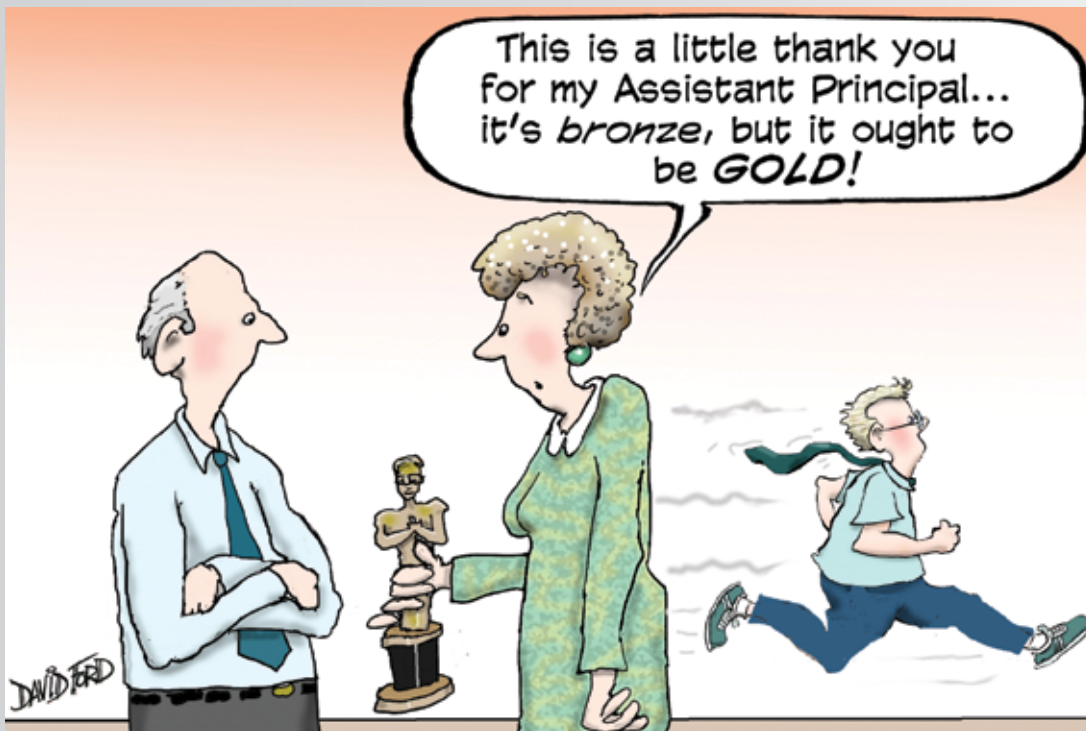
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# Humor me!

Created by **David Ford**, Retired Washington State Principal



# ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS MATTER

*Sometimes, the best next step for an assistant principal is staying right where they're needed the most*

## Dr. Scott Seaman

Executive Director, AWSP

**It's a question** I get asked all the time: "As you look back on your career, what was your favorite role in education?"

The answer? My time as an assistant principal.

If I have any professional regrets, it would be that I ascended into the principal role way too fast, and should have enjoyed more time as an assistant principal. Why? Because it is the best job in the K-12 system. Many of you are reading this right now and nodding in agreement. It's the best position because you have a leadership role, but are not in charge of the entire kitchen. You have some of the adult messes, but not all of them. And, best of all, you get to be with the kids who need you the most. That is the key.

## FIRST RESPONDERS

As an assistant principal, I was instantly thrown into relationships with students that were literally life saving. These were students who knew they could turn to me for anything and everything life was throwing their direction. I provided a space for healing, calming, recovering, affirming, and hope. I also provided direction, boundaries and unconditional love. Even though some adults in the school questioned my patience and tolerance for "unacceptable behavior," I knew I was changing a life forever through the relationships I was slowly nurturing.

There hasn't been a more important time in the history of public education than right now to make sure our students have access to caring, nurturing, empathetic and restoring assistant principals. APs are on the front lines of the trauma and drama

that walks through the front doors of every school in our state. APs serve as the first responders and recipients of how each day unfolds. And, as each unpredictable day starts rolling, it's the behavior, attitude, bias (implicit and explicit) and heart of an AP that can single-handedly shift the climate and culture in a school. Assistant principals matter, and our educational system better start paying closer attention to the important role they play in the K-12 system.

Public education is overwhelmed with stress and anxiety like never before. Mental health related issues are skyrocketing as the woes of society spill into our schools. All adults in the system are bending, and close to breaking, with these increased pressures. Everyone plays an important role in the system. However, as we talk about maintaining school safety, reducing suspensions, and constantly responding to mental health crises, our assistant principals ultimately are the first lines of defense.

There is no question in my mind we need more social workers, school counselors, mental health professionals, and other qualified caring adults in our schools. Our goal should be to reduce the adult to student ratio. In the meantime, our system needs to reexamine how we allocate assistant principals to make sure every school is staffed appropriately to match not only the student count, but the special programs housed within a particular school.

## AMAZING APs

We also need to reconsider a mindset that has existed for decades: the notion that assistant principals must

be preparing to move on to become principals. That notion is just flat-out wrong and needs to be reconsidered. Of course we need great people to aspire to the principalship and that will happen naturally, but we also need great people to stay in a role where they fit best and where they are needed the most. We need to acknowledge that staying in an AP role is not only acceptable, but encouraged.

Our students need consistent adults in their lives. Those students experiencing more trauma and ACEs than others need that consistency and strong relationships even more. During my tenure as a principal, I was blessed to have two life-long amazing and life-changing assistant principals working for the kids in our school. I got to witness on a daily basis the power of the positive relationships they forged with the kids who needed them most.

I can easily say the culture of our school was built around the consistency of an administrative team, but more importantly, two incredible assistant principals who loved kids unconditionally in the same roles, same school, and same community for 10 years in a row. There is no way I would have "survived" as long as I did in my principal role without my two assistant principals content with doing what they did best, where they were needed the most. Their impact was immeasurable.

Assistant principals matter. Let's build a system that honors their impact. ■



*Dr. Scott Seaman joined AWSP in the fall of 2013 after serving as the principal at Tumwater High School. In July 2018, he assumed duties as Executive Director.*





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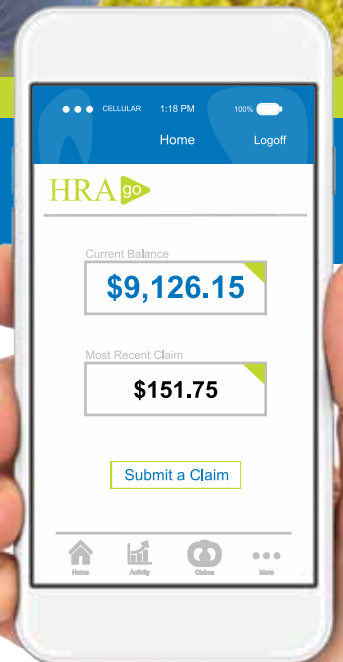
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