



BOOKENDS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

PRINT NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS | SPRING 2025



FORWARD THINKING: An inspiring group of school leaders gathered in Olympia for AWSP's annual Day on the Hill this winter. These passionate educators met with local legislators to champion The Big Three and other key priorities impacting schools across Washington. Their voices help amplify the needs of students, staff, and communities, driving real change in education policy. Read more on page 6.



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— Jennifer Lasher,
First Grade Teacher



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- Get **Free** AI tools through sponsored opportunities
- Gain access to guided learning pathways

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Psst...! Want to Win \$100?

We want to make sure you received this newsletter. (And that you, hopefully, even read it!) Scan this QR code or visit go.awsp.org/read to let us know you received it safely. We'll enter you to win a \$100 Amazon gift card!



The Future is *Now*

School Leaders,

It's fun to look back on old shows or cartoons that predicted what the future might look like. *The Jetsons* is a prime example. George Jetson would often make video calls using a large screen. How true that prediction came to be with FaceTime, Zoom, telehealth, and smartphones! Many families now also have household assistants like the Jetsons' "Rosie," better known to us as Alexa and Siri. While Alexa can't cook and clean, she certainly helps with organization, shopping, news updates, answering questions, and even changing the thermostat.

Back to the Future is another example. While we may not yet have self-drying jackets and flying cars, we have certainly made progress with hoverboards and biometric security features.

While some came true and some did not, these futuristic predictions all shine light on a common truth: *the future is now*. We are living in a timeframe with technologies and advancements that were once only a dream—and not all that long ago. This realization can be humbling and empowering all at once.

As the years keep coming, where do we see ourselves, our state, the field of education in the future? What actions are we taking now to make that happen? What innovative tools and strategies are being born today that will have the greatest impact on the decades ahead?

This issue of *Bookends* highlights several ways AWSP, our members, and our partners are planning for the future of education. You'll find important tips around AI and ideas to take your leadership to a futuristic level. You'll hear from AWSL Director James Layman on building a blueprint for student leadership in your school. We share an update from AWSP's Roz Thompson on the legislative actions being taken this session to influence statewide plans and policies for school leaders and the students they serve. AWSP's Jack Arend shines a new light the AWSP Leadership Framework and how to use it to maximize your leadership. And finally, Executive Director Dr. Scott Seaman fills us in about ongoing partnership efforts to realize a vision of a Statewide System of Leadership Development. There is much more to discover in this issue, so we better let you keep reading.

When it comes to thinking ahead, there is no better time than now. Our students are counting on us!

Caroline Brumfield
AWSP Marketing and Design Director



AWSP & Foundation

Nominate for 2026 Principal and AP of the Year



Know an incredible principal or assistant principal who stands out from the rest? Nominations are now open for 2026 Washington State Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year.

Each year, AWSP chooses four winners to receive this prestigious award: one elementary and one secondary principal, and one elementary and one secondary assistant principal. The elementary principal winner will represent Washington as our NAESP National Distinguished Principal award winner, and the secondary principal will represent Washington for the NASSP Principal of the Year award. Likewise, the elementary assistant principal winner will represent Washington at the national level as our National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) National Outstanding Assistant Principal. The secondary assistant principal winner will represent our state for the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) National Assistant Principal of the Year award. Learn more and nominate at go.awsp.org/POY and go.awsp.org/APOY.

Pssst...! For hints on what makes for a stand-out leader, read about our 2025 winners on page 19.

Welcome to the Team, Christine Bryan!



By now, you've likely made some contact with the wonderful Christine Bryan, either by phone, by email, or through all the projects she touches. Meet our newest team member!

Christine joined the team in August 2024 as AWSL's Accounts Receivable Coordinator. With a strong background in education and school operations, Christine brings a wealth of experience in financial management, student activities, and program coordination. Christine's role has since evolved to include member support and communications with both AWSL and AWSP.

Outside of work, Christine enjoys spending time with her three adult children, gardening, reading, and traveling. We're so thankful to work with you, Christine!

AWSL's Summer Program Registration is Open!



AWSL Summer Programs are returning for 2025 to Cispus, Eastern

Washington University, and Central Washington University!



Over 3,000 students participate every summer in one of the many summer programs the Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL) offers. Each summer program allows students to learn, grow, connect, and develop their leadership skills in an immersive, dynamic experience.

Registration opened in March. Now is the time to plan your budget to prepare for AWSL's Summer Program season! Need to figure out how to pay for AWSL Summer Programs? Check out our "How to pay for AWSL Programs" reference guide to start planning now. Check out our 2025 dates and prices at www.awsleaders.org/campdates.

Spring Forum: Join Us May 1



Join us for our 2025 Spring Forum on May 1 from 4-5:30 p.m. We'll discuss what's happening in the Legislature and the education landscape across the state. Our guest speakers will help you close the year out strong and plan for the next one. Clock hours are available! Register on the AWSP Learning Lab at go.awsp.org/springforum. Special thanks to our Forum sponsor, **Renaissance!**





Highlights

Chaperone Training Resource from Outdoor Schools WA

Having effective supervision is critical to the success of any outdoor school program. Many times, schools call upon parents and other active volunteers to join in and help students in a multitude of ways. However, when chaperones don't have a clear understanding of their purpose at outdoor school, confusion and unnecessary stress can result.

Realizing the importance of chaperone preparation, Outdoor Schools WA developed a short course that explains the vital role of chaperones, provides some helpful pointers on important topics (communication, setting expectations), and how to handle situations with their own children while at outdoor school. Also included is a series of scenario cards that give chaperones a chance to address realistic issues before they find themselves hiking on a trail with students. The slide deck is customizable so you can add additional slides for any school-specific information you'd like to share.

This resource is totally free and available on our website at <https://www.outdoorschoolswa.org/chaperone-training-materials>.



Scan to access OSWA's Chaperone Training Resource.

Outdoor Schools WA Wood Cookie Awards



OSWA presents Gov. Jay Inslee with the Big Cookie Award in January.

Outdoor Schools WA (OSWA), part of the Washington Principals Education Foundation, works tirelessly to advocate for outdoor education for each and every student throughout the state of Washington. However, this work only comes to fruition when many hands work together to create success. This year, Outdoor Schools WA chose three recipients to receive the coveted Wood Cookie Award for Going a Cut Above the Rest, including Former Governor Jay Inslee, Representative Alicia Rule, and Steve Christiansen.

Outdoor Schools WA and Partners met with Former Governor Jay Inslee in mid-January to share his Wood Cookie Award and give thanks for his dedication to Outdoor Schools. The former governor championed the Outdoor Schools for All bill and helped to secure funding for Cispus Learning Center and OSWA while in office. We are grateful to the Former Governor for aligning with our association on the importance of Outdoor Schools.



OSWA presents Rep. Alicia Rule with the Big Cookie Award in March.

In March, Outdoor Schools also had the opportunity to present Representative Alicia Rule with her Wood Cookie Award. Rule was a primary sponsor of the Outdoor Schools for All bill and has been an enthusiastic supporter of our programs. It was a great chat before she headed onto the busy legislative floor for the day and we were able to remind her how vital outdoor schools are and that funds are necessary in this year's budget. We appreciate Rep. Rule for being a great Outdoor Schools champion.

Something particularly exciting about this year's Wood Cookie Awards is that it was designed by students at Washington Middle School and Mr. Morris's Arts/Tech and Marketing class. They did a magnificent job creating the unique Wood Cookie Awards, blending student creativity with the spirit of outdoor education! ■



LOOKING AHEAD

Amidst Change, AWSP Members and Staff Move Forward with Advocacy

Pictured above: AWSP members and staff gather in Olympia during AWSP's Day on the Hill in February.

Roz Thompson, Government Relations and Advocacy Director, AWSP

This year's theme for my weekly legislative updates is "Change". We are certainly in the midst of change with a new Governor and a new President. We also have many new legislators and an evolving budget situation, so every day, there seems to be some sort of change to respond to in our political news.

Amidst all of this change, I believe that we need to keep moving forward to support those policies and decisions that match our values—those of supporting public education and the students and staff who attend our schools. Fortunately, many of you have engaged in our advocacy efforts and work hard to be change makers in your buildings and districts, as well as across our state and nation.

This year, the focus of our state's legislative session is definitely on the budget, as we have an estimated shortfall of \$10-\$12 billion over the next four years. While revenue is still coming in, it is coming into our state at a lower rate than was expected. We also have higher caseloads to support and our legislators have some big ideas about how to spend state dollars to support all Washingtonians.



AWSP's Roz Thompson advocates for school leaders at the National School Leaders Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C., in March.



Pictured above: AWSP's contract lobbyist Casey Brown of Strategies 360 and Senator Lisa Wellman listen to AWSP members during the AWSP Day on the Hill in Olympia in February.

Last spring, a concerted effort to focus our advocacy efforts on school funding was organized. This "Big 3" messaging has been critical for all districts in Washington as many of them are moving closer to binding conditions and are having a harder time paying their monthly bills. The message has been clear for months. Our state needs to fully fund these aspects of basic education: Special Education; Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC); and Transportation.

Two of these critical issues still have momentum through SB 5192 (MSOC) and SB 5263 (Special Education). The Senate Democrats' budget shows at least \$1 billion in new funding for these two areas. The House budget adds noticeably less new funding. We hope that the funding adopted in the final budget at the end of April at least matches that of the Senate budget.

Because the emphasis has been so much on the budget, there are fewer policy bills that continue to move. The most significant may be HB 1285 and SB 5327, related to learning standards. Both bills would require that the financial literacy standards be addressed in the State Board's Future Ready Initiative, which takes a comprehensive look at all graduation requirements. The Senate bill would also include computer science standards in that process.

"Our state needs to fully fund these aspects of basic education: Special Education; Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC); and Transportation."

Other policy bills that continue to move through the legislative process include bills related to school safety, juvenile justice, CTE, continuing to allow retired administrators to work in schools, and clarifying the Parents' Bill of Rights. Be sure to read my weekly legislative updates for the most timely news from Olympia.

In the "other" Washington, a group of eight principals and assistant principals from our state traveled to Washington, D.C. in March to advocate for public education with over 400 principals from around the country at the National School Leaders Advocacy Conference



AWSP staff, AWSP board members, and students gathered in Washington, D.C. in March for the National School Leaders Advocacy Conference.

(NSLAC). We attended the conference from Sunday to Tuesday and then met with our Members of Congress and/or their staff on Wednesday.

The NSLAC legislative agenda (go.awsp.org/NSLAC25) focused on “fighting forward” for public education, rejecting efforts to increase voucher programs, supporting federal funding for Title grants and IDEA funding, calling attention to the need to recruit and retain people in education, and supporting efforts related to school safety, and to the mental health and wellness of both students and staff.

Back home in our Washington, we have also engaged in advocacy efforts with our state agencies this winter related to the seated lunchtime rules, revised discipline rules, and revised rules related to school health and safety by the State Board of Health. Thank you to the many members who provided feedback on these important policy decisions.

There are many different ways to share your voice. Advocacy is a year-round effort and you can participate in ways big and small. Attend local town halls, invite legislators to your schools when the Legislature is not in session, or host a legislator as a “Principal for a Day.” Consider donating to our Political Action Committee or joining our AWSP Advocacy Council. You could also send monthly emails to legislators as a “Principal Partner for a Legislator,” sign-in support or against bills, or complete “Action Alerts.” The possibilities are endless! Check out our advocacy web page at www.awsp.org/advocate for more information.

As always, many thanks for all that you do for students and staff. If you have questions or comments or want to get involved in our advocacy efforts, please reach out to me at roz@awsp.org. ■

AWSP’s 2025 Legislative Platform

Sharing the AWSP legislative platform empowers our members to advocate for policies that support principals, schools, and students across Washington. Use the QR code below to view AWSP’s full platform, or visit go.awsp.org/legplatform.





Contract FAQs

AWSP receives many calls and questions about principal contracts. We put together an online contract guide to help you navigate RCWs, contract language, minimum requirements, and more. Below are a couple frequently asked questions and their answers. Check out our full contract guide by scanning the QR code on the right or visit go.awsp.org/contracts.



Q: Should principal groups formalize their relationship into an official collective bargaining group?

A: AWSP's longstanding stance is no, we don't recommend it. Maintaining a positive relationship with the district office is crucial. Forming into another union for the district to contend with is not recommended. Additionally, quite often both central office leaders and building leaders receive similar contract perks, so working together is mutually beneficial. You are in this together and must be a united front in leading the district. However, it is important to organize yourselves into an official "Principal Leadership Team," not just for bargaining purposes but also to establish a united K-12 voice of school building leaders. The Principal Leadership Team can inform district-level leaders about school and district culture issues as well as systems that either help or hurt student learning. This team should serve as a vital resource to the superintendent throughout the year.

Have Questions?

Don't ever hesitate to call our office. No question is too small, and there isn't a reason you should have to problem-solve alone. Reach out to 800.562.6100.

Q: What are some examples of contract minimums?

A: One common minimum requirement in contracts is the identification of the parties involved. This includes the names of the individuals or entities entering into the agreement, as well as any relevant contact information. By clearly identifying the parties, it is easier to enforce the terms of the contract and hold each party accountable for their obligations.

Another crucial minimum to include in contracts is the scope of work or services to be provided. By clearly defining the scope of work, conflicts and misunderstandings can be minimized, leading to smoother transactions.

Contracts should include details on the payment terms and deadlines. This includes the amount to be paid, the method of payment, and the schedule for payment. By establishing clear payment terms, both parties can avoid disputes over money and ensure that payments are made in a timely manner.

Other minimum requirements that should be included in contracts are clauses related to termination, dispute resolution, and confidentiality. These clauses outline the procedures to be followed in the event that the contract needs to be terminated, a dispute arises, or sensitive information needs to be protected. ■



Building Teams, Policies, and Implementation Strategies

Three of Washington's ESD EdTech Leads Offer Their Best Advice for Thoughtful AI Implementation

Vanessa Allen (ESD 189 Anacortes)

Mike Batali (ESD 105 Yakima)

Kim Weaver (ESD 114 Bremerton)

From February 3-5, 2025, Washington State educators gathered in SeaTac for the "2025 AI Innovation Summit" provided through collaborative efforts of six statewide educational organizations. Among the presenters were the EdTech leads from all nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs) in Washington State. In this article, three of the EdTech Leads offer their advice for school leaders who are trying to reap the benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) while avoiding potential pitfalls.

Getting Your Team and Policies In Place

- Teamwork makes the dream work! Your team should include representatives from the district admin,

school admin, teachers, staff, students, families, community members, and network services/IT. Your ESD EdTech Coordinator can be a team member, too! Make sure the team is up to speed with AI basics, including how AI works, how to identify and mitigate bias, privacy concerns, and the impossibility of detecting AI-generated work.

- Review and update existing policies, handbooks, and syllabi with respect to AI use. Some questions to get you started include:
 - Which areas need updates and which areas need entirely new policies?
 - What laws do you need to keep in mind? (Student data privacy, public records, etc.)
 - What policies will govern adult use? (Consider teachers and other staff.)
 - What policies will govern student use? Is this consistent for all ages of students?

- Be thoughtful about appropriate use pledges. If you're going to ask adults or students to sign appropriate AI use pledges, ensure they can distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate use! Some questions that can help you determine this are:
 - Am I using AI to increase efficiency or augment my thinking and skills? This is probably an appropriate use.
 - Am I asking AI to produce outputs that I can't (or won't!) assess or understand? If so, this is probably an inappropriate use.

Moving from Policy to Implementation

- Consider your information literacy program (Media Literacy, Digital Literacy, Digital Citizenship, and AI Literacy) and enhance or update it as necessary. Foundational skills in media literacy and digital

citizenship should start in kindergarten, even if AI is introduced later. Information Literacy should be content-embedded, coherent, and K-12.

- Identify and support the professional development needs of teachers and other adults in your system. Teachers need dedicated learning time to understand the value of AI in their own work so that they can improve efficiency and educational outcomes, and guide students to engage in safe, ethical, and appropriate AI use. Building educator confidence in AI use is a necessary step for both their own use of AI and their support of students using AI.
- Support age-appropriate student interaction with AI. Expectations for student use of AI need to be explicit in how and when it is appropriate to use.
- Focus on uses of AI that support student learning. While this might sound obvious, it can be easy to get distracted by “flashy” or “fun” uses of AI tools. Consider using the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines to evaluate potential AI uses.

- Stay informed on AI developments and reinforce AI literacy and responsible use for both adults and students. Remember, the workflow should always be Human - AI - Human, where a human is always at the beginning and the end of the process involving AI. The human element is critical to examining for tone, bias, and errors. Use AI as a tool and examine and question AI outputs.

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines

Though the pace of change in this field can be dizzying, we believe the potential uses of AI justify facing its pitfalls through thoughtful planning and collaboration. No matter where your school or district stands on AI adoption, your State-wide ESD EdTech Team is here to help. Contact your regional EdTech Lead for more support. ■

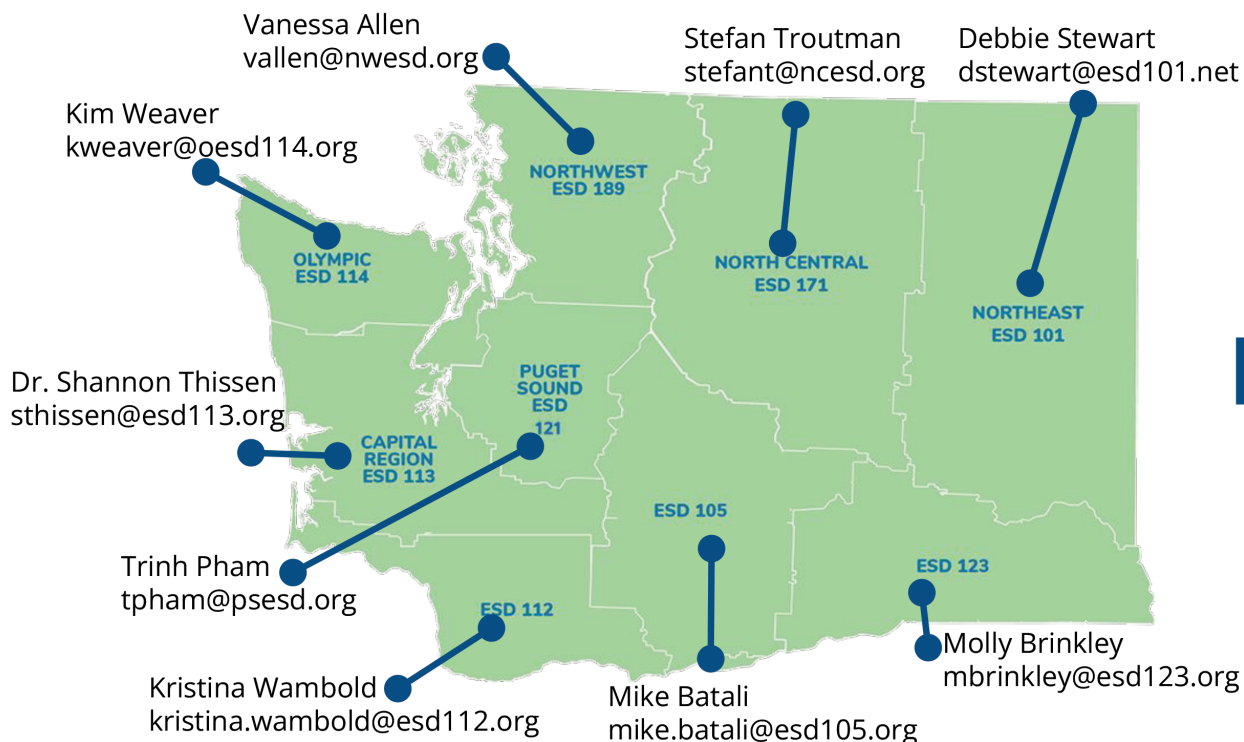
Identify Your Support Resources

We know that implementation of AI is not any easy lift given other priorities, but you are not alone! Below are our recommendations for trusted resources to give you more information and guide you through the steps described above. (Each can be accessed by scanning the QR code in the gray box to the right.)

- WSSDA draft policies for AI can provide a starting point
- OSPI AI Guidance
- Office of Educational Technology “Empowering Education Leaders: A Toolkit for Safe, Ethical, and Equitable AI Integration”

Resources and Links

Scan this QR code to access resources and links references in this article, or visit bit.ly/4i4ImHk.



ESD EdTech Leads

LEADERSHIP FOR A NEW ERA

— 43RD ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE —

JUNE 22-24, 2025
SPOKANE CONVENTION CENTER

Brought to you by



Invest in Yourself. Invest in the Future of Education!

The annual Summer Conference hosted by AWSP and WASA is an event you won't want to miss if you're a school or district leader passionate about growth, collaboration, and making a real difference in education!

Happening June 22-24 in Spokane, this year's conference is all about connecting with fellow leaders, learning from the best, and walking away with fresh ideas and practical strategies. With the theme "Leadership for a New Era," we'll dive into critical topics like fostering collaborative cultures, technology leadership in education, building resilient schools, culturally responsive leadership, leading with impact, and transformative leadership.

Summer Conference is just as much about the connections as it is about the learning. Leading a school or district can feel lonely, but Summer Conference creates a space for you to meet and engage with fellow leaders who are facing the same challenges and celebrating the same wins. It's a chance to share insights, brainstorm solutions, and build a network of support that will last long after the conference is over.

Leading at the school or district level takes a lot out of you, which is why this conference also emphasizes the importance of self-care and well-being. You'll leave with strategies to balance the demands of leadership while taking care of your own health and happiness.

There's never been a more important time to invest in your own professional learning. With a wide range of sessions and topics, you'll walk away with new tools, creative solutions, and a renewed sense of purpose to lead your schools to even greater success. This is your chance to grow, connect, and recharge—don't miss it!

Meet Our Keynote Speakers

This year's Summer Conference promises to inspire and energize school principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and district office administrators through its powerhouse lineup of keynote speakers. Each speaker brings a unique and timely perspective on leadership, communication, and organizational culture, making them perfect for an audience dedicated to navigating the complexities of modern school leadership.

These remarkable keynote speakers were selected because their expertise directly aligns with the core goal of the conference: to empower education leaders to build resilience, communicate effectively, and create positive, authentic learning environments. Each speaker brings actionable strategies and inspiration that will leave attendees better equipped to lead with confidence and compassion in the ever-evolving landscape of education. Read on to learn more about each keynoter.

Want More Details?

Scan the QR code to learn more and register, or visit go.awsp.org/SC25.





Dr. Taryn Marie Stejskal

Founder and Chief Resilience Officer of the Resilience Leadership Institute (RLI), and Author

Sunday Banquet Keynote – Resilient Leadership: Thriving in the New Era of Uncertainty

Dr. Taryn Marie Stejskal is author of the book, *The Five Practices of Highly Resilient People: Why Some Flourish When Others Fold*. After conducting two decades of original research on resilience, Dr. Taryn Marie developed the empirically based framework, *The Five Practices of Highly Resilient People* and believes that resilience is the key to individual, teams, and organizational growth and acceleration across the globe. Her mission is to positively impact the lives of 1 billion people through the practices of resilience. Prior to founding RLI, she served as the Head of Executive Leadership Development & Talent Strategy at Nike, as well as Head of Global Leadership Development at Cigna.

Global Gurus has recognized Dr. Taryn Marie as a Top 30 Thinker in Leadership. She is a Marshall Goldsmith Top 100 Global Executive Coach, and she was a finalist for the Tony Hsieh Award, which is named for the former CEO of Zappos and awarded to those who are leading human capital innovation.



Sarita Maybin

Motivational Speaker, Communication Expert, and Author

Monday Opening Keynote – If You Can't Say Something Nice, What Do You Say?

Sarita Maybin is a dynamic and seasoned speaker, known for empowering audiences with the skills to transform uncomfortable conversations into constructive communication. With a career spanning over two decades as an international speaker and communication expert, Sarita has shared her insights in all 50 states, 10 countries (including Iceland), and on the prestigious TEDx stage. Sarita blends real stories, practical solutions, and a relatable presence that engages her audience and inspires positive action. Her universal message has resonated with a diverse range of clients, including American Dental Association, Million Dollar Round Table, National Conference of State Legislators, Department of the Navy, and the University of California. Leveraging her background as a former university dean of students with a master's degree in counseling, Sarita shares strategies for enhanced collaboration and communication.

As a “military brat” who thrived in a life of constant change, she brings a unique perspective, emphasizing that the power of communication is not just in what you say, but how you say it.



Jeff Butler

Motivational Speaker and Author

Tuesday Brunch Keynote – The Authentic Workplace and The Key To The New You

Jeff Butler is an author and workplace strategist who explores human behavior within the working world. His experience spans over 40 industries in four continents on how diverse cultures and employees interact with each other. He studies common threads of behavior in industries such as IT professionals, underground utility workers, police officers to clothing retail chains. In addition, Jeff has also worked with companies like Google, Amazon, John Deere, and Coldwell Banker.

As a researcher and practitioner, Jeff also runs a consulting company and a tech company, TrinityFix, where he is able to test his ideas in different workplace environments. His ideas have made it to TEDx twice, appearing in dozens of media outlets including two books on human behavior: *The Authentic Workplace* and *The Key to the New You*. Currently, he lives in Dallas, Texas as an out-of-place Californian. ■

Invest in yourself this summer! Learn more and register at go.awsp.org/SC25.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP:

WHO? WHAT?

NOW
WHAT?



Creating the Blueprint for Success



AWSL Director James Layman reviews "bites and snacks" of school culture and climate with Mountain View Middle School students.

James Layman, Director, Association of Washington Student Leaders

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, one truth remains constant: students are the experts at being students. They understand the pulse of their schools, the realities of their peers, and the possibilities for change. When given a platform to lead, students bring insightful perspectives and drive meaningful action. Student summits serve as a powerful avenue to amplify student voices, fostering a culture of engagement and collaboration between students and adults.

The Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL) has long been a champion of student summits, working alongside schools and districts to bring these transformative experiences to life. Rooted in the “Who? What? Now What?” framework, AWSL summits create an intentional space where students and adults come together to celebrate successes, identify challenges, and design actionable solutions for school culture and climate improvement.

Who? Building Connections and Trust

The first component of an AWSL student summit is the “Who?”—bringing together students from diverse backgrounds who may not know each other. Trust doesn’t happen instantly, but it is essential for meaningful dialogue. Through structured activities and intentional interactions, students build connections, creating the foundation necessary for honest conversations about their school’s culture and climate. When students feel seen, heard, and valued, they are more likely to engage in shaping a positive school environment.

What? Recognizing and Celebrating the Good

Once trust is established, students transition to the “What?” phase. Here, they reflect on and celebrate what they love about their school—the culture, traditions, events, and people that make their experience positive. This ‘love list’ is a strengths-based approach, highlighting what works well.



School summits not only create avenues of awareness around school culture and climate, they allow students to network, bond, and strengthen their relationships.

When schools recognize and reinforce these positive elements, they can build upon them, ensuring that these aspects continue to thrive.

Now What? Creating the Change Schools Wish to See

The final phase, “Now What?” shifts the focus to areas not yet on the ‘love list’ but that students wish could be. This is where the magic of student summits truly comes alive. Students explore their role, as well as the role of adults, in making these desired changes a reality. Through collaborative discussions, they develop an action plan that includes small and large steps to bring about tangible improvements in school culture and climate.

AWSL has long encouraged educators and administrators to ask a simple yet profound question: Have you asked your students yet? Too often, decisions about school culture and engagement are made without the input of those most affected—students themselves. Student summits change this dynamic, positioning students as co-creators of their educational experience rather than passive participants.

Beyond the immediate impact on student voice and engagement, student summits align with the AWSP



Mountain View Middle School students connect while sharing ideas with each other.



Mountain View Middle School students create their “love list” –a list of what they love about their school!

Leadership Framework, allowing school leaders—both students and adults—to:

Create a Culture: Establish a collaborative school environment where students and adults build a thriving community.

Engage the School Community: Foster relationships strengthening connections between students, staff, and families.

Plan with Data: Use student input as valuable qualitative data to drive cultural and academic decisions.

Ensure School Safety: Cultivate a sense of belonging and emotional security through open dialogue.

Close the Gap: Identify and address disparities in student experiences and explore access to opportunities.

Bringing Student Summits to Your School

The energy and impact of student summits are undeniable. By placing students in the driver’s seat, these events illuminate both current realities and long-term possibilities for schools. Whether your district is seeking to enhance student engagement, strengthen school culture, or foster meaningful partnerships between students and adults, a student summit can be the catalyst for lasting change. How can student summits support the culture and climate in your school or district? The answer starts with inviting students to the table—because when students lead, schools thrive. ■

James joined the AWSL staff in the summer of 2017. James has been a part of the AWSL organization since 2001 since attending camp as a delegate and has served as a Junior Counselor, Senior Counselor, and Camp Director.



AWSL SUMMER PROGRAMS 2025

Visit AWSLeaders.org/campdates

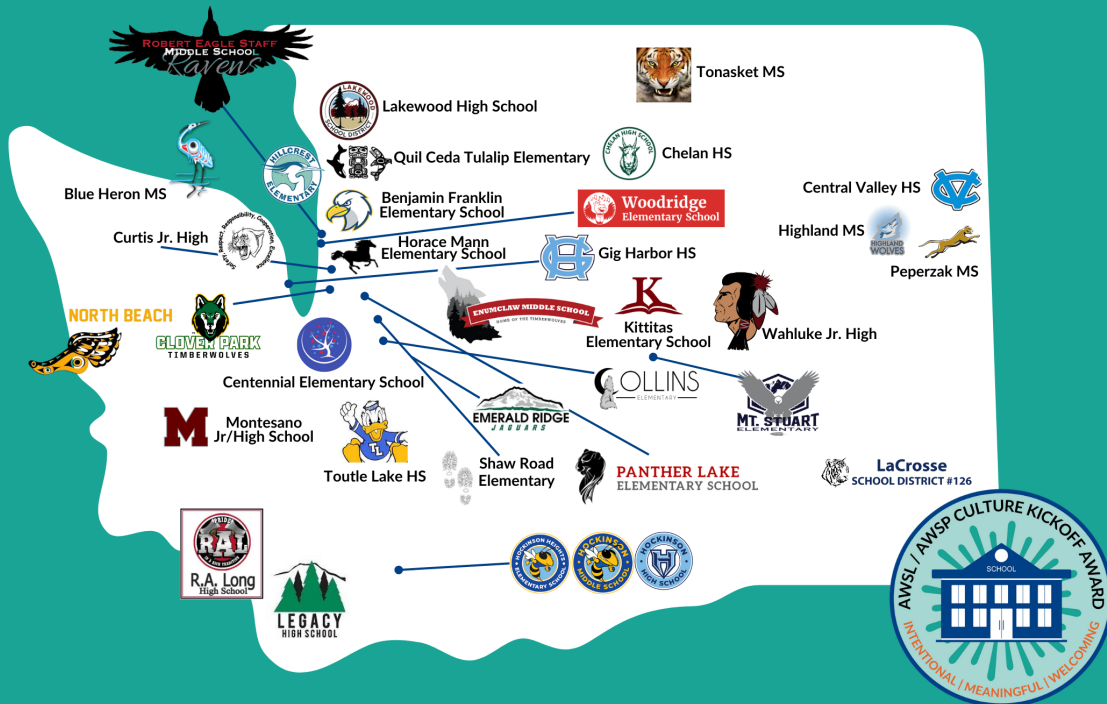


STUDENT ENGAGEMENT. STUDENT EMPOWERMENT. STUDENT VOICE.

Let's Celebrate!

Meet our Inaugural Culture Kickoff Award Winners

2024 CULTURE KICKOFF AWARD WINNERS



Culture Kickoff

A strong school culture sets the foundation for student success, staff collaboration, and community engagement. This year, the Association of Washington School Principals and the Association of Washington Student Leaders introduced the Culture Kickoff Award to honor schools that started the year with energy, intention, and inclusivity.

These schools have demonstrated dynamic assemblies, strong themes, student leadership involvement, and a commitment to sustaining a positive culture all year long.

We had 34 schools from all across the state in our inaugural class of award winners. Check out the map above to see each winning school and their location!

Sustaining the Momentum

This award is just the beginning. Each winning school has plans to sustain their culture-building efforts throughout the year. Congratulations to all of this year's winners for setting the bar high.

Read more about two winners in particular in our highlight on the following page.

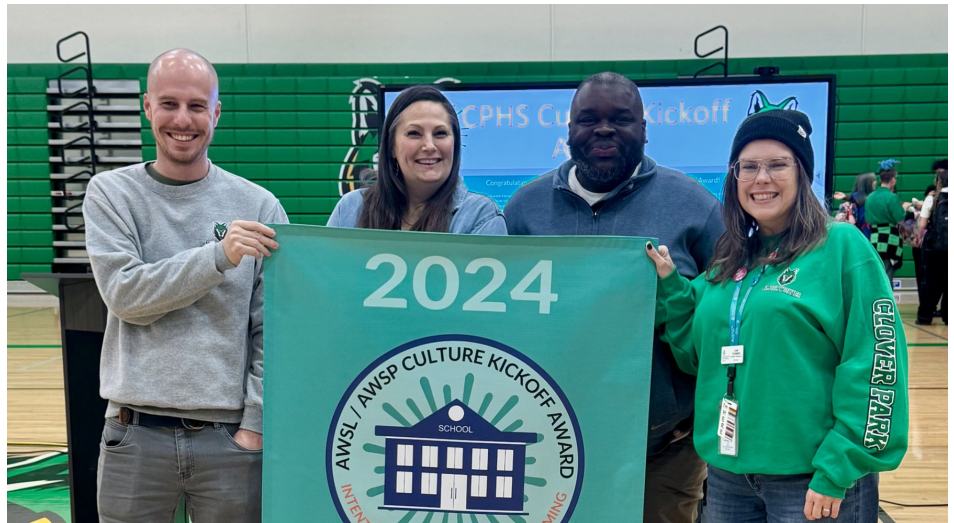
School Leadership in Action

A Highlight of Two Culture Kickoff Award Winners

Clover Park High School was recognized for its student-centered leadership, with students from ASB, band, choir, S2S, Latinos Unidos, JROTC, and other groups working together to shape their school's culture. Their strong theme and intentional planning for the year stood out as a model for others.

Enumclaw Middle School also earned recognition for its dedication to a strong kickoff. Leadership teacher Karl Karkainen worked alongside students to apply for this award, highlighting their efforts in:

- Planning assemblies, Timberwolf Talks, and implementing the school's theme, "What You Do Matters: Own It."
- Hosting summer leadership planning days where students stepped outside their comfort zones to prepare for the year.
- Organizing a collaborative welcome-back assembly that tied into their theme.
- Coordinating efforts across the Admin Team, Building Leadership Team, and Culture and Climate Team to ensure a lasting impact. ■



Clover Park High School Principal Rene McCord and CPHS students and their families accepted the Culture Kickoff Award from AWSP in December.



From the Enumclaw Middle School Facebook page: Enumclaw Middle School staff and students were honored as winners of the 2024 AWSP/AWSL Culture Kickoff Award in January. Leadership teacher Mr. Karl Karkainen worked alongside students to apply for this award this fall.

Know a school doing something great for school culture?
Nominate for 2025!



The nomination window runs from September 1-30, and awards are presented in October. Learn more at go.awsp.org/culturekickoff or scan the QR code at right.

Principals and APs of the Year

These Four Standout Leaders Deserve a Round of Applause!

Cathi Davis

Ruby Bridges Elementary, Northshore SD

Cathi Davis, the founding principal of Ruby Bridges Elementary School, has been named the 2025 Washington State Elementary Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals, recognizing her exceptional leadership, unwavering commitment to inclusion, and profound impact on students, staff, and families.

Opening Ruby Bridges during the challenges of the pandemic, Davis set out to create an environment where every child belongs. Under her leadership, the school has become a model of inclusive education, ensuring that students of all abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles have access to the support they need to thrive. By eliminating barriers to participation and fostering a culture of belonging, she has inspired both educators and students to become advocates for inclusion.



Elementary Principal of the Year Cathi Davis creates an environment where everyone belongs at Ruby Bridges Elementary in Northshore School District.

2025 ELEMENTARY
PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR



Colleagues and educators praise Principal Davis as a visionary leader who has implemented groundbreaking inclusive practices. She has cultivated a staff culture committed to equity, encouraged student self-advocacy, and mentored future education leaders. Ruby Bridges is now one of 16 University of Washington inclusionary demonstration sites, and Davis shares her expertise nationally, working tirelessly to transform schools into spaces where every child is valued.



2025 SECONDARY PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Secondary Principal of the Year Chelsea Gallagher fosters a supportive environment at Mt. Spokane High School in Mead.

Chelsea Gallagher Mt. Spokane High School, Mead SD

Principal Chelsea Gallagher’s leadership has been instrumental in fostering an inclusive, supportive, and high-achieving school environment, making Mt. Spokane a beacon of excellence for students, staff, and the community. Gallagher’s dedication to servant leadership has left an indelible

impact on the school. Known for her open-door policy and unwavering commitment to student success, she is described as a leader who “elevates and celebrates others, champions the underdog, pushes excellence, and brings out the best in everyone around her.”

Her presence is felt everywhere—from academic discussions to assisting custodial staff—exemplifying her belief that no job is too small when it comes

to serving the school community. Chelsea’s leadership has profoundly shaped Mt. Spokane High School, not only as an educator but also as a mentor and advocate for students. As one staff member and parent noted, “She knows most students by name, invests in their activities, and makes the school an incredible place each day.” Her passion for fostering a positive school culture is evident in her support of student events, spirit days, and extracurricular programs.



2025 ELEMENTARY AP OF THE YEAR

Dr. James West Cascade Elementary, Kennewick SD

Cascade Elementary’s Dr. James West has been recognized as the Washington State 2025 Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year, an honor that reflects his exceptional leadership, commitment to student success, and dedication to fostering a positive school culture.

For the past six years, Dr. West has played a pivotal role in transforming Cascade Elementary into a welcoming and student-centered learning environment where every child feels valued, supported, and empowered.

His leadership has driven initiatives to improve schoolwide safety, strengthen student attendance, and implement a robust Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program.

Beyond his work within the school, Dr. West has been instrumental in building strong partnerships with families, staff, and local organizations. His passion for inclusive education is evident in his advocacy for special education students, as well as his dedication to coaching teachers and staff to support all learners effectively.



Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year Dr. James West helps all students feel valued at Cascade Elementary in Kennewick.

NOMINATE FOR 2026!

Know an incredible principal or assistant principal who stands out from the rest? Nominate them for 2026 Washington State Principal or AP of the Year. Learn more about each award and the selection process at go.awsp.org/POY or go.awsp.org/APOY, or scan the QR codes below.

PRINCIPAL
OF THE YEAR



ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
OF THE YEAR



2025 SECONDARY AP OF THE YEAR



Terry Jess **Juanita High School,** **Lake Washington SD**

Juanita High School's Terry Jess has been named the Washington State Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year in recognition of his outstanding leadership, dedication to equity, and transformative impact on the school community.

Since joining Juanita High School, Jess has been a driving force for change, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for students and staff alike. His commitment to equity-focused leadership has led to initiatives such as Affinity Homerooms, non-gendered bathrooms, and a Family Engagement Resource Center to better serve multilingual families. He has also spearheaded professional development for staff on racial equity and has been instrumental in creating safe spaces for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ students.

Jess is a leader who not only listens but takes action. His advocacy for historically marginalized students, emphasis on restorative practices, and dedication to student success have reshaped the culture at Juanita High School. Through initiatives like the newly established Juanita Flex Academy and data-driven systems for student support, he continues to bridge opportunity gaps and ensure every student has a path to success. ■



Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year Terry Jess is a leader who not only listens but takes action at Juanita High School in Lake Washington School District.

BELONG.
CONNECT.
EMPOWER.
HEAL.
THRIVE.

AWSP's Leaders of Color Network is waiting for YOU! Will you get involved in our next event?



What is the Leaders of Color Network?

AWSP is committed to growing, supporting, and sustaining educational Leaders of Color through the creation of the Leaders of Color Network (LOCNET). This initiative is designed to provide a safe and brave space for Black and Brown leaders, fostering opportunities for collaborative learning, relationship building, and a strong sense of belonging. Through LOCNET, AWSP aims to support leaders of color, enhance allyship, amplify diverse voices, and increase representation within our organization.

Three Ways to Get Involved

If you're a Leader of Color looking to connect, here are three ways you can get involved this year and beyond:

Meet with us monthly on Zoom or in person.

Our monthly Zoom meetings feature guest speakers and qualify for clock hours. We also meet in person for special events like the annual WOW Gallery Social in Seattle. Learn more at www.awsp.org/LOCNET.

Join the Leaders of Color Network on WhatsApp. Use the QR code on the next page to get signed up for Leaders of Color specific notifications through WhatsApp.

Update your member demographics. The more we know about you, the better we can tailor our communications to your interests and needs. Log in to our site and update your demographics at member.awsp.org/s/login/.

A Successful iGrow WA Summit

If you missed AWSP's second annual iGrow WA Summit for Leaders of Color on March 14-15, we missed you! But don't despair—we'll be back again in spring of 2026. Check out these event photo highlights on the following pages and find more on AWSP's Flickr account. ■



Dr. Tron Young, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services for Alton Community Unit District 11 in Illinois, is the founder of the original iGrow Summit. He's pictured here with AWSP's own Kamrica Ary Turner-Beaver who brought the iGrow Summit to Washington state.



Dr. Maria Breuder, Erin Taylor, Annie Parker, and Dr. Jessica Proctor presented a session called “Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Co-Mentoring through Affinity Spaces” as part of the AAPI Education Leaders of Washington.



Dr. Wilnic Gideon (center), Principal at Eisenhower Middle School in Everett Public Schools, gave a powerful breakout presentation on the C.O.N.C.I.U.S. Framework and was also highlighted as an author during the luncheon. Pictured with Aileen Panniker (left) and Angela Lee-Pope.



A gathering of leaders: AP Harland Warrior, Principal Dr. Richard Brown, AP Ivery Rhodes, and Bellevue Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. William Jackson.



Students from Mount Tahoma High School's Viet Club performed at this year's iGrow WA Summit.

Leaders of Color, Connect On WhatsApp!

Leaders of Color, stay connected with AWSP and each other during the school year! Scan this QR code for direct access to AWSP's LOCNET WhatsApp Community.





Continuing the AI Journey in Education

Empowering Our Schools with the Foundations for Success with AI and Generative AI

Rachel Wortman Morris, Ph.D., Director, Next Generation Insights Learning Lab, Microsoft Clinical Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, University of Washington

Pictured above: Hundreds of school and district leaders gathered in Seattle this February to learn the latest in AI tools for education at the AI Innovation Summit, held by AESD, AWSP, OSPI, WASA, WSIPC and WSSDA.

As I leave my house each morning to walk my 1st grader to our neighborhood elementary school in Seattle, I turn off the lights before I close the door. This simple action—turning off the lights—is something we all do multiple times a day and it has been since the Rural Electrification Act of 1936. Because of this Act, by the mid-20th century, most American homes had access to electricity, transforming daily life and enabling technological advancements. Electricity is a general-purpose technology.

On Tuesday, I needed to find the phone number for my tailor, and so I opened the browser on my phone and typed in the business name and instantly I had the phone number, the address, and the business hours. The internet has become a general-purpose technology. Using the toaster in the morning to toast my bread—while this is a technological innovation—it is a single-purpose technology.

Today we are at the beginning of the Era of AI. AI isn't just a technological innovation; it's a general purpose-technology, reshaping work, education, and opportunities for our students in ways similar to yet different from the general-purpose technologies that have come before it.

This follow-up article to my OSPI AI Summit Keynote aims to extend our discussions, offering practical insights for integrating AI effectively and responsibly in K-12 education. This is about laying the foundations for success with AI and Generative AI. To maximize AI's transformative potential in education, there are three foundational pieces that can help institutions successfully develop, deploy, maintain, and evaluate AI systems going forward. Schools must become:

- People-ready
- Data-ready
- Cloud-ready

People-Ready

Your institution can become people-ready by focusing on aligning AI with institutional goals, developing an institutional strategy for the use and



Dr. Rachel Wortman Morris gives a keynote presentation to school and district leaders on day two of the AI Innovation Summit in Seattle in February. Photo credit: Becca Freimuth, ESD 171.

implementation of AI, and equipping all stakeholders with AI skills and ongoing skill-development opportunities. Ultimately your success hinges upon the readiness of people across all levels of the institution.

Data-Ready

AI is grounded in data. So that means data-ready institutions must have an understanding of processes, controls, and accountability structures to govern data privacy and security, responsibly. This is the bedrock of Responsible AI and AI Governance for your institution. Data readiness ensures that you can create sustainable value from your data and from AI.

Cloud-Ready

Finally, cloud-ready institutions have the data and infrastructure to fuel and run AI solutions at scale. This is what will enable you to work across your schools, the districts, and the whole of the state at scale to maximize your opportunities with AI.

These three foundational pieces can ensure that you are able to successfully develop, deploy, maintain, and evaluate AI systems to unlock most potential for everyone in your schools. From teachers using AI to create and update lesson plans, materials, and assignments to developing interactive

and engaging learning materials, personalizing the learning experience for every student. From improving data collection, processing efficiency, and dissemination to inform decision-making at state, district, and school levels to using the data to identify disparities to address equity issues. And finally, from providing the students with guidance and the education needed to enable them to leverage AI to students using AI tools to kickstart their learning and idea generation. Empowering educators, schools, and districts to develop policies that foster the different and complex skills needed to navigate this new technology—just as your predecessors did when the internet first came into schools and homes in the 1990s.

These three pieces—being people-ready, data-ready, and cloud-ready—are truly foundational as you look ahead for they will shape how schools, administrators, and teachers will interact with this new general-purpose technology as we progress and as our students progress in this Era of AI. ■

Special thanks to Microsoft for sponsoring the AI Innovation Summits and the keynote by Dr. Rachel Wortman Morris!



The AWSP Leadership Framework

A Must-Have Resource for Every Principal and Assistant Principal

Jack Arend, Deputy Director, AWSP

Let's be honest—being a school leader is kind of like being the ringmaster of a circus, except your performers are hundreds of students, a staff with varying caffeine levels, and an inbox that never stops growing. Whether you're a seasoned leader looking for ways to sharpen your practice or a brand-new principal figuring out where to start, the AWSP Leadership Framework is an invaluable resource that will support you at every stage of your leadership journey.

A Framework Refresher

The AWSP Leadership Framework has been around for a while, standing the test of time as a trusted resource for school leaders and their supervisors. Whether you've used it for years or you're just getting familiar with it, everyone deserves a refresher on this great tool. Districts are encouraged to reach out to AWSP and schedule a Leadership Framework Refresh session for their school leaders. Additionally, school leaders can attend any AWSP Professional Learning event, where the Framework always takes center stage. These opportunities ensure that both new and experienced leaders stay sharp, engaged, and ready to make the most of this essential resource. Did you know Washington is the only state with a leadership framework actually created by practicing school leaders? That means it wasn't dreamed up in some distant office—it was built by people who have actually had to navigate lunchroom duty, unexpected fire drills, and the occasional rogue squirrel in the gym.

A Framework That Gets It

The AWSP Leadership Framework isn't just some checklist that collects dust in your office. It's a practical, real-world guide to help principals and assistant principals thrive—not just survive. It

provides best practices, helps you show and share the impact of your leadership (because we know you do more than just sign paperwork), and fosters a collaborative approach to school leadership. Basically, it's like having a mentor or coach in your back pocket.

Making Leadership Less of a Mystery

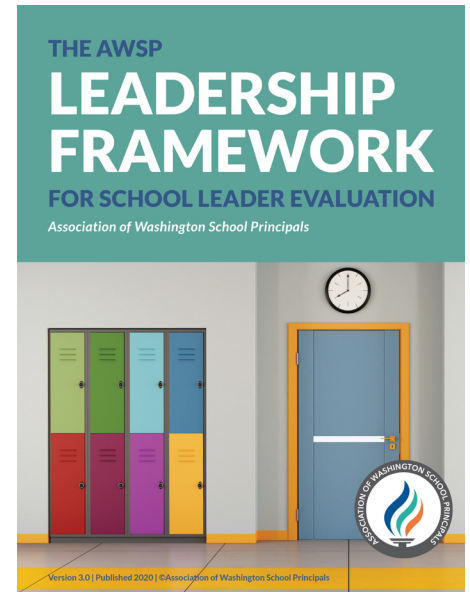
If you've ever tried to explain your job to someone who thinks principals just "run the school," you know the struggle. Leadership is complex, and proving your impact can be tricky. That's where the AWSP Leadership Framework steps in. It helps you clearly connect your daily decisions to student learning, school culture, and teacher development.

So the next time someone asks, "What exactly do you do all day?" you'll have more to say than "putting out fires" (though, let's be real, that's a big part of it too).

You Don't Have to Do It Alone

Leadership should never be a solo sport. The AWSP Leadership Framework encourages teamwork. It supports mentorship, peer learning, and shared leadership, so you're not out here trying to reinvent the wheel every time a new challenge rolls in.

By using this framework, you can engage in meaningful conversations with other school leaders, get real feedback, and—dare we say—actually feel supported in your role. Whether through professional learning communities, district-led development, or just a good old-fashioned vent session with a fellow principal, this framework helps you grow alongside others who get it.



Helping You Nail Your Evaluation (and More)

The AWSP Leadership Framework's purpose is to provide a guide on how to grow professionally throughout your career. AWSP knows school leaders are evaluated every year, and we hope the process is centered around professional growth and collaboration with your supervisor. AWSP designed the Framework to support growth and development conversations between you and your colleagues and you and your supervisor.

With resources to support you in all eight of the state-required criteria, the Framework helps leaders and their supervisors have meaningful conversations that are centered around growth and aligned to the eight state-required criteria. All of this helps you reflect on your leadership while making sure you're checking the right boxes. (Sometimes it's nice to know you're on the right track.)

Not Just Another Hoop to Jump Through

Nobody got into school leadership because they wanted to spend hours filling out forms. The AWSP Leadership Framework isn't about bureaucracy—it's about making your job more effective and (hopefully) a little easier. It's designed to support, develop, and empower leaders, not just give them another task to complete.

When you engage with the Framework beyond just evaluation season, you unlock its full potential as a tool for reflection, goal-setting, and growth. Think of it as your GPS for leadership—helping you navigate the daily challenges of running a school with confidence and clarity.

Final Thoughts (Before the Next Crisis Hits)

Washington is leading the way with a leadership framework designed by real school leaders, setting a high bar for principal and assistant principal support and development. Whether you're a veteran school leader or just stepping into the role, the AWSP Leadership Framework provides the structure, guidance, and community you need to thrive.

Remember, school leadership can be challenging, but you don't have to do it alone. With the AWSP Leadership Framework, you can focus on what really matters—creating a great school for your students, staff, and community. And if that rogue squirrel ever returns to the gym, well, at least you'll have a plan for that too. ■

Jack joined the AWSP team in July 2019. He has served in education since 1989 as an elementary, middle and high school music teacher. He began his building leadership career in the fall of 2006 as the principal of Peter G. Schmidt Elementary in the Tumwater School District. After eleven years in the principalship, he served two years at the Central Office level overseeing multiple content areas and mentoring first year teachers.



SCHEDULE A LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK REFRESH WITH AWSP!

To get started, email AWSP Deputy Director Jack Arend at jack@awsp.org. To learn more and access the Framework and supporting materials, scan the QR code or visit go.awsp.org/leadershipframework.



AWSP's LAUNCHING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP NETWORK

For New or Newly Assigned School Leaders

2025-26 Three-Part Series

☁ Aug. 7-8 ☁ Nov. 17-18 ☁ March 2-3



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⚙ Sept. 22 ⚙ Nov. 18-19 ⚙ March 3-4



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“ASK A PRINCIPAL”

In October, we asked school leaders to “share a moment when you realized your vision for your school was becoming a reality.” Here are a few of the great answers:

"Our high school made a bold commitment this year to **becoming a phone-free environment** after being lax for the past couple of years. At first, we anticipated challenges in getting all stakeholders on board, but the support exceeded our expectations. The first few weeks were tough as everyone adjusted, but soon, we began to witness something amazing—**kids being kids again**. Students are more engaged in class and have started having meaningful, in-depth conversations. This shift has even pushed teachers to increase the rigor because students are progressing through the content more efficiently."

Kirsten Mulvaney, Assistant Principal,
Toppenish High, Toppenish SD

"The moment I realized our vision of every student belongs was becoming a reality was when other staff started creating opportunities to **make each student feel special and loved**. For example, one staff member started making friendship bracelets for students in her intervention class and it caught on like wildfire. Enough so, that we had one for staff and students with special words. Another staff member coordinated having her class call new students and welcome them to school. That became an instant hit and **all new students received a welcoming call** from a peer in their classroom, and sometimes in their home language."

Stephanie Barringer, Principal, Meridian
Elementary School, Kent SD

"This school year, I'm returning to the elementary level from junior high and one vision that I had for my new building was to create a culture of **building and developing student leaders**. Some of the leadership opportunities we've created this year are crossing guards, breakfast helpers, kindergarten buddies, hospitality crew (before school/assemblies), library support, campus beautification team, and morning announcement team. We have had hundreds of students complete our leadership interest form and have been plugging in so many students into our leadership teams. The rate of behavioral incidents has decreased, students have expressed their excitement for their service, and the **overall climate of the building is becoming more and more positive**. My vision of our school raising, empowering, and sending off leaders to the next level is quickly becoming a reality!"

Marcus Micheles, Assistant Principal,
Shaw Road Elementary, Puyallup SD

"**Sharing ownership of our belonging SIP goal with our student advisory** (4th-6th graders in a K-6 school), stepping back and watching them take it and run with it, them choosing to schedule weekly meetings for themselves, and their **true ownership of it**. And, it's only October 1. I can't wait to see what they accomplish this year! Shout out to James Layman (AWSL Director) for setting us all up for success in June!"

Faye Britt, Principal, Hazelwood Elementary,
Edmonds SD

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Daymond John

An entrepreneur in every sense of the word, Daymond John is CEO and Founder of FUBU, a much-celebrated global lifestyle brand, and a pioneer in the fashion industry with billions in product sales world-wide. Former President Barack Obama appointed Daymond John a Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship (PAGE) to harness his energy, ideas, and experience to help develop the next generation of entrepreneurs both at home and abroad. John's experience and expertise is on full display through his work as an award-winning speaker, and as a best-selling author of books such as *Power of Broke* and *Rise and Grind*. John is also celebrating his 16th season on ABC TV's critically acclaimed reality show, *Shark Tank*.



Ghody Muhammad, Ph.D.

Gholnecsar (Ghody) Muhammad is an associate professor of Literacy, Language, and Culture at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She has previously served as a classroom teacher, literacy specialist, school district administrator, curriculum director, and school board president. She studies Black historical excellence in education, intending to reframe curriculum and instruction today.



John C. Maxwell

John C. Maxwell is a #1 New York Times bestselling author, speaker, coach, and leader who has sold more than 34 million books. He founded Maxwell Leadership—a leadership development organization that has trained tens of millions of leaders in every nation. Having been recognized as the top leader in business and the world's most influential leadership expert, Maxwell continues to influence individuals and organizations world-wide—from Fortune 500 CEOs and national leaders to entrepreneurs and the leaders of tomorrow.



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naesp[™] National Association of
Elementary School
Principals

Supporting Students by Supporting Leaders



Pictured above: Shannon Leatherwood, now superintendent of Coupeville School District, guides students during her time as principal at Spanaway Middle School. Shannon was the 2023 Secondary Principal of the Year, and joined the AWSP Board, school and district leaders, and educational partners in January of 2025 for a conversation about a Statewide System of Leadership Development.

Dr. Scott Seaman Executive Director, AWSP

Imagine if we put the same time, attention, rigor, and resources into supporting the development of school leaders as we do for other key professional positions in our society. *Just imagine.* Think about the rigor involved in education, training, and practical experience to become a pilot, police officer, or doctor. Think about the scope of responsibility and impact of those professions and then compare them to school leaders.

Today's school leaders at any given moment of any given day are thrown into extremely stressful, complex, and urgent situations similar to the intensity of an emergency room physician. They can literally face life or death situations with the well-being of everyone involved resting in their hands, much like a pilot with a planeload of passengers. Yet, unlike these other professions, the training to become a school leader isn't even comparable, and our students are the ones impacted the most.

It's Time to Meet the Demands of the Profession

Over the course of the last 15 years the complexity and demand placed on school leaders has grown exponentially. We've added more and more to their plates (which we now refer to as charcuterie boards), and many are reporting the job to be overwhelming, untenable, and nearly impossible. The result? Higher turnover, decreased longevity in the role, mid-year resignations, increased medical leaves, etc. Again, who suffers the most? Our students.

So, instead of admiring the problem, AWSP is embarking on an awareness and action campaign to start identifying both short and long-term solutions that will grow, support, and sustain our school leaders. Until we can change what we expect of our school leaders, we'd better figure out how to support and keep our current leaders while also attracting our future school leaders.

“Instead of admiring the problem, AWSP is embarking on an awareness and action campaign to start identifying both short and long-term solutions that will grow, support, and sustain our school leaders.”

We are going the wrong direction in terms of supporting the importance of school leaders in our educational system. Even though research (thank you, Wallace Foundation) says there is no

greater investment in the K12 system than supporting school leaders, we, as the state of Washington, continue to ignore the important role that you all play. If school leaders are potentially the number one influence on student achievement, shouldn't the system reflect that in policy, structures, and resources?

How we prepare and support our school leaders doesn't match the realities of their work, and continuing to ignore this fact is compromising the entire system. The consequences of a revolving door of leadership changes in a school have a catastrophic impact on students, staff, and the community at large. We must all come together and make reimagining a Statewide System of Leadership Development a priority and *do it now*.

How AWSP is Working Toward Change

The AWSP Board is leading the charge by engaging statewide partners, organizations, agencies, and associations in this conversation. We've moved from talking about the problem to identifying some action steps despite ongoing reductions in education funding at the state level. Until our elected officials prioritize support for school leaders, we must work within the confines of current systems and structures to highlight the realities you face daily while also dreaming about what a new

“How we prepare and support our school leaders doesn't match the realities of their work, and continuing to ignore this fact is compromising the entire system.”

“The AWSP Board is leading the charge by engaging statewide partners, organizations, agencies, and associations in this conversation.”

ongoing Statewide System of Leadership Development could look like in our state.

We Need Your Help

How can you help? Use your voice. While we strongly believe that serving as a school leader is the best job in the world, we also say it is the most challenging. Don't let your experiences go to waste. Share your stories with us, your supervisors, elected officials, and community. Bring awareness to the important role you play, the impact you have, and the challenges you face daily. We can't bring awareness to this statewide issue without your voice. How else can you help? Get involved and take action in supporting current leaders and those waiting in the wings. Loop back to your principal prep program to share how they could bolster their programs to better prepare future leaders. Start a local principal support group to share best practices and problem-solve together. Join our efforts in dreaming and building a new system that supports leaders now and those in the future. Serve as a mentor or coach to principals and assistant principals in your region and/or context. We are in this together and it will take all of us to make the necessary changes.

Kids are Counting on Us

In 1995, I graduated from Seattle University with a master's in school administration. I just finished a year-long internship where I was provided

at least 90 days of release time for full-day practicum experience. I was not only eager to take that first step into school leadership, I felt confident and ready. In 1995 the job was way different than what our leaders face today. Yet now, current funding for interns preparing for today's leadership demands might result in maybe 15 days of "release time." That's educational malpractice and just one example of why the system must change. Our kids depend on it. Can you imagine your doctor saying to you, "Well, this is my first surgery, hope it goes well." ■

Dr. Scott Seaman joined AWSP in the fall of 2013 after serving as the principal at Tumwater High School. Scott became Executive Director in 2018.



Ready to Get Involved?

We can't change the system without your help. Stay up-to-date on our latest efforts and learn more about how to get involved by scanning the QR code below. You can also visit go.awsp.org/statewidesystem.



Thank you to our business partners!

Business partners help AWSP grow, support, and sustain principals and assistant principals in Washington state. Strong leaders create strong schools which create strong students. To learn more about each of our business partners, visit www.awsp.org/partners.



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