



2024-2025 Advocacy Advisory Council Handbook

The mission of the Association of Washington School Principals is to support principals and the principalship in the education of each and every student.

Association of Washington School Principals

Revised October 2024

Introduction

Background

AWSP has been an active participant in the state legislative process for years. One of our main goals as an association is to be a leading voice on statewide, K-12 education issues, including principal leadership. We want to enable our members and staff to be better prepared and more effective in working with both legislators and issues.

Recent years have witnessed increasing involvement by the Legislature in K-12 issues. Although their interests have varied, lawmakers have primarily centered on education reform, governance, funding, teacher principal evaluations and accountability. As legislators continue to comment on the need for principal input and participation, it becomes increasingly evident that building administrators must speak with a clear and consistent voice on education issues, especially related to those that support principal leadership.

This handbook outlines and focuses the process for AWSP's involvement in legislative affairs in public education. The purpose of this handbook is to provide an overview of the strategic goals of AWSP's Advocacy Advisory Council as well as operational procedures, timelines and contact information. We always welcome your suggestions on how we can improve the handbook's content or format.

Focus Areas:

1. Utilize the perceptions and experiences of members to inform the AWSP legislative platform and positions.
2. Engage members in the policymaking process, as it applies to the Legislature and other education agencies and organizations.
3. Provide members with current information from the Legislature, federal and state agencies, and other education stakeholders.

Legislative Program

The efficacy of AWSP's legislative program rests upon having a statewide, grassroots Advocacy Advisory Council. AWSP relies heavily on the expertise and insights of practicing principals from around the state to identify and respond to various professional and education issues. The Advisory Council also responds to issues originating at the state level and conveys information to members for reflection and comment. This process allows AWSP to focus locally, regionally, and statewide as needs dictate.

Our success is dependent upon several key players in the process, including:

1. Members of the AWSP Advocacy Advisory Council representing each ESD
2. Grade Level Committee Legislative Liaison Representatives
3. AWSP Executive and Support Staff
4. Advocacy Advisory Council Chair(s)
5. Director of Government Relations and Advocacy
6. Washington School Principals Legislative Effectiveness Association
7. Principal Partners for Legislators (new in 2018-19)

Advocacy Advisory Council Function

The AWSP Advocacy Advisory Council serves as liaison and resource to the AWSP Board on all legislative matters. Functions include:

1. Identifying and prioritizing AWSP legislative concerns
2. Monitoring legislative action and assisting with AWSP testimony as appropriate
3. Recommending legislative direction/action (as necessary and when practical) to the AWSP Board
4. Channeling legislative input from the membership
5. Championing and recruiting members to join the Washington School Principals Legislative Effectiveness Association (PAC)
6. Serving as members of the Washington School Principals' Education Foundation Board of Directors
7. Nominating a state-level public servant for the AWSP Torch of Leadership Award

This committee is directly involved in gaining knowledge regarding legislative issues, establishing lines of communication with the membership and providing communication during periods of legislative action. Other important functions include establishing and cultivating direct, one-on-one relationships with legislators.

Job Descriptions

Advocacy Advisory Council Membership

1. We try to ensure that each of the 9 ESDs in the state is represented by at least one member from each of the three grade levels (with a few additional members from ESD 121) for a total of about 30-40 members who comprise the AWSP Advocacy Committee. We welcome any AWSP member who is interested in advocacy work.
2. The Advocacy Advisory Council has a chair(s) and potentially a chair elect.
3. The federal relations liaisons from the three grade level committees are members of the AWSP Advocacy Advisory Council.
4. Each grade level committee president and AWSP president are also ex-officio members.
5. The director of government relations and AWSP's retirement liaison are ex-officio members of the committee.
6. Council coordinator (AWSP staff)

Advocacy Advisory Council: Chairmanship

The chair(s) and chair-elect of AWSP's Advocacy Advisory Council are appointed by the president of AWSP. It is intended that the rotation into the chairmanship will provide for representation of the east side/northwest/southwest on a rotating basis. The rotation allows periodic access to the chair position(s) for representatives of each of the grade level committee groups. The chairs work directly with the director of government relations and are responsible for the overall legislative program of the Association.

Advocacy Advisory Council: Member Responsibilities

- Attend Advocacy Council meetings as your schedule permits. These take place weekly during the legislative session and monthly during the interim. (Out-of-state meetings are to be approved by the Executive Board.)
- Assist in developing the annual Legislative Platform for AWSP.

- Provide principals with legislative information related to their congressional districts and receive input from the field on issues/concerns.
- Select principals to serve as legislative links with their local state representatives and senators.
- Recruit members to join the PAC

Advocacy Advisory Council: Grade Level Committee Legislative Liaison Representatives

Each grade level committee can appoint one representative as liaison to the Advocacy Advisory Council. These members are responsible for representing the official positions of their committees with respect to pending legislation. Additionally, the liaisons report back to the committees at the earliest possible time regarding legislative action, committee decisions, etc.

Government Relations Director

The director of government relations and advocacy is an AWSP staff member with overall responsibility for AWSP's legislative program. The director is active in organizing, communicating, training, lobbying and testifying. More importantly, however, the director provides support and assists the committee and other appointed members in accomplishing AWSP's legislative goals. The director is responsible for preparing a report for each AWSP Board meeting. The purpose of this report is to provide information to the AWSP Board and to receive input and direction from the Board with respect to AWSP's position. The director also reports to component boards as requested.

Legislative Calendar

AWSP's annual legislative calendar begins in the spring of each year, at the conclusion of the legislative session. This sets the stage for the fall meeting of the Advocacy Advisory Council, when the previous session's results and development of an agenda for the upcoming session will be discussed.

Spring

1. Following the end of each legislative session, the director of government relations will provide information to all AWSP members related to key legislation passed during session.
2. The director of government relations will capture initial ideas related to the next legislative session.

Summer

1. The director of government relations will continue working with education advocates on important issues and share information during the annual AWSP/WASA summer conference and at board meetings (June and August).
2. A preliminary list of ideas for potential legislation and a new legislative platform will be generated prior to the fall board meeting in September.

Fall

1. The director of government relations will provide information regarding the upcoming legislative session at the first fall Advocacy Advisory Council meeting. The primary focus of this effort is to refine the legislative platform that will be presented for final approval to the AWSP Board based on the key issues identified.

2. During this fall meeting, all council representatives will report on specific issues from their districts. It is also suggested that this meeting be used to bring in outside resources that will further the participants' knowledge regarding upcoming issues.
3. The grade level legislative liaison representatives or director of government relations will then report to their respective groups at their fall conferences/meetings on the legislative action of the Advocacy Advisory Council. It is suggested that these individuals provide information to the grade level group leadership as well as to the membership in general.
4. The Advocacy Advisory Council will confirm preparations for the upcoming legislative session. The committee should have, by this time, accepted input from the ESD regions and from the fall grade level conferences/meetings. Council members will then finalize an action plan that will provide the director of government relations the support necessary to deal with the focus issues throughout the upcoming session.

Winter

1. The director of government relations will coordinate the legislative efforts of the Association during the legislative session. In doing so, they will work closely with the Washington Association of School Administrators and/or the Washington State School Directors' Association in providing testimony on key issues to be heard in the House and Senate. A winter meeting is held during the legislative session to allow members the opportunity to discuss the status of key issues and legislation, and to visit the Capitol, attend hearings and meet with legislators.
2. During the session, weekly conference calls (hosted by the director of government relations) provide council members an opportunity to offer input on current issues being considered by the Legislature.

Principal Partners for Legislators

Beginning in the fall of 2018, the director of government relations and advocacy will work with AWSP staff to partner each of Washington's 147 legislators with a local principal. The goal of this program is to further develop relationships and lines of communications with legislators. Monthly email templates will be sent out to all participants.

Contacting Your Legislators

AWSP has provided a direct link to all Washington state lawmakers on its website at www.awsp.org. Click "Advocate" on the menu bar located at the top of the home page, and then click "Action and Advocacy Center." Scroll down to "Find Your Elected Officials" and enter your street address and zip code.