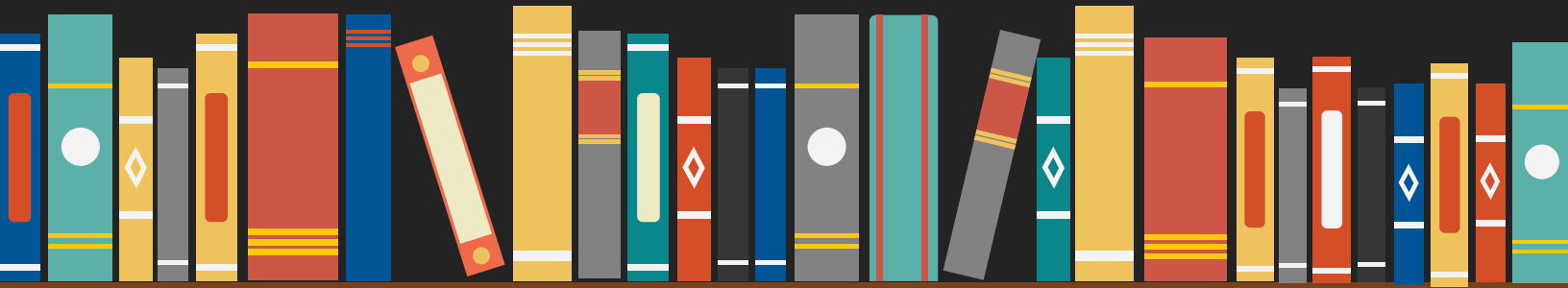




BOOKENDS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

PRINT NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS | SPRING 2026



BETTER TOGETHER: This issue of *Bookends* celebrates many great partnerships. Pictured above are Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL) students immersed in leadership activities at the Cispus Learning Center. This year, AWSL and Cispus celebrate 125 years of collective impact. Read more on page 14. You'll also find articles from each of the keynote speakers at our upcoming AWSP/WASA Summer Conference (June 28-30 in Spokane) on page 19. The conference theme is "Better Together: Leading with Purpose. Connecting with Heart."



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SUMMER CONFERENCE
JUNE 28-30, 2026 | SPOKANE




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Caroline Brumfield

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NSPRA Award of Excellence

AWSP is honored to receive an award of excellence for Bookends from the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)! Thank you to all contributors for making this publication a valuable member resource.

The Power of “Twelve”

I write this column on the tails of a Seahawks Super Bowl victory. (Go Hawks!) While the Seahawks had a standout year, there is one thing you will notice about the team each season whether they win or lose: They never fail to acknowledge their “Twelves.”



As many fans know, the Seahawks began the Twelfth Man tradition in 1984, retiring the #12 jersey to honor their fans. The gesture recognized that the energy, support, and spirit of Seahawks fans are as powerful as having another player on the field. The tradition continues today. The 12 flag is raised before each game, and the Twelves were front and center in this year’s Super Bowl celebration.

Coach Mike McDonald said post-victory, “We’ve got the best fans in the world. Twelves. We never waver, we believe in each other... and now we’re world champions.” The Seahawks’ message is simple: *We are better together.*

While we’re not on a football field, the same is true in our schools. At AWSP, we believe we are better together—with our members, with fellow education organizations, and with our school communities. And just as the Seahawks have their Twelves, each of you has yours. They are the colleagues, students, families, and partners who celebrate your wins, steady you in challenges, and stand with you through every season. Their support is not peripheral—it is powerful.

“Better Together” is more than a phrase for AWSP. It is the theme of our upcoming Summer Conference in Spokane on June 28–30 and the throughline of this issue of *Bookends*. In these pages, you’ll find reflections on leading with purpose from our Summer Conference keynote speakers— Brad Montague, Carlos Ojeda Jr., and Sandy Zimmerman—along with stories of student transformation at Cispus Learning Center through the Association of Washington Student Leaders. We also highlight OSPI’s Revised Learning Standards and how to support your team in implementing them successfully.

As you read, I encourage you to consider: Who are your Twelves—and how are you strengthening those relationships? As always, we’d love to hear from you. Reach out anytime! ■

Caroline Brumfield
AWSP Marketing and Design Director



AWSP & Foundation

AWSL/AWSP's Schools on the Rise Award: Nominations Open in April!



The "Washington Schools on the Rise" award by AWSL/AWSP celebrates schools where students and adults collaborate to improve culture and amplify student voice. AWSP and its Foundation support these schools with resources and opportunities. These schools foster inclusive and equitable environments. Know a school on the rise? Nominate them today and honor their commitment to excellence in education! Nominee schools should be a member of both AWSL and AWSP. Nominations open April 1 and close May 31. Learn more, view past winners, and nominate at www.awsp.org/ontherise.

AWSL Summer Camp Registration is Now Open for 2026!



AWSL Summer Programs are returning for 2026 to Cispus, Eastern Washington University, and Central Washington University!

Over 3,000 students participate in one of the many summer programs offered by the Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL) every summer. Each summer camp enables students to learn, grow, connect, and develop their leadership skills in an immersive and dynamic experience. Learn more and register at www.awsleaders.org/campdates.

AWSP's 2026 Member Survey



Your voice matters—and so does your experience. AWSP's 2026 Member Survey helps us understand what it's really like to lead a school in Washington right now: workload, staffing, safety, compensation, support systems, and what would most improve the role.

We use these results to advocate for principals and assistant principals with state leaders and education agencies, and because many questions are asked each year, your responses also help us track trends over time and strengthen our case with credible, long-term data.

Please take the 10-minute survey by April 30. Enter your email address for a chance to win one of five \$50 Amazon gift cards! Scan the QR code below or visit <https://bit.ly/40g8845>.



AWSP Spring Forum: Join Us May 5



Join us for our 2026 Spring Forum on May 5 from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Each of our quarterly school leader forums is a member benefit and are a time to hear from your association leadership and leaders from our partners across the state. Clock hours are available! Register on the AWSP Learning Lab at www.awsp.org/forums. Special thanks to our Forum sponsor, Renaissance Learning!

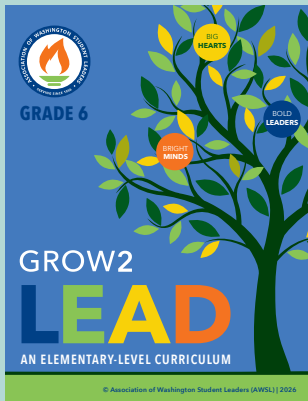
Nominate for AWSP's 2027 WA Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year



We need your help finding the 2027 Washington State Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year! Let's recognize some of the amazing leadership around the state. Nominations are open through May 31. Learn more and nominate today at www.awsp.org/POY and www.awsp.org/APOY. Special thanks to our sponsor, Lexia Learning!

Highlights

AWSL's Grow2Lead Curriculum is Coming this Spring!



AWSL's Grow2Lead is a purposefully designed Pre-K–6 leadership and social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that helps schools cultivate confident, compassionate, and capable student leaders, one classroom, one voice, and one moment at a time.

What sets Grow2Lead apart is its belief that leadership is not a separate program or a role reserved for a few students. Leadership is taught as a daily, learnable skill set embedded into classroom life. By intentionally blending leadership development with SEL, Grow2Lead helps students practice leadership through real relationships, everyday choices, and meaningful contributions to their learning communities.

Each lesson follows a predictable structure while leaving room for creativity, discussion, and authentic student voice.

Information about purchasing the curriculum is coming soon to www.AWSLeaders.org. Questions? Email Shelley Barker at shelley@awsleaders.org.

AWSP's Building Administrative Support Experts (BASE)



AWSP is piloting a new membership type for principal secretaries and administrative assistants. This group is called "BASE" and meets monthly to discuss the needs and challenges of building administrative support experts. Want to learn more or get involved? Email Christine Bryan at christine@awsp.org.

Legacy in the Outfield



Join AWSL and Cispus Learning Center this August at T-Mobile Park. We'll celebrate something bigger than a game: the people, place, and programs that have shaped generations of leaders across Washington for 125 years.

For 70 years, the Association of Washington Student Leaders has helped students discover their voice, their courage, and their capacity to lead.

For 55 years, the Cispus Learning Center has given those same students a place to grow through nature, challenge, reflection, and community.

Legacy in the Outfield is a chance to reconnect, honor shared memories, and welcome the future. Alumni, students, educators, families, and friends will gather in one space to celebrate leadership, education, belonging, and the outdoors while enjoying a Seattle Mariners game. Watch for all the details at www.awsleaders.org/awsl70.

Stay Connected in Retirement



If you are planning on retiring this year but would like to stay involved in work you have a passion for, join AWSP as a Lifetime Member. Lifetime members are eligible for service on committees and short-term projects or programs. They also receive all publications, access to AWSP's website resources, and free registration to the annual Summer Conference.

Combine your AWSP Lifetime membership with renewal in your national affiliate to retain your professional liability and legal coverage. Protect your livelihood in the event of an unexpected job-related action that may arise after you retire or leave the principalship.

Planning on retiring? Let us know before you go! Email Macy Bruhy at macy@awsp.org.

Understanding the Revised Washington State Learning Standards

Washington State's Learning Standards are undergoing periodic review and revision, led by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). As updates are finalized and released across content areas, school leaders play a critical role in translating revised expectations into aligned curriculum, instruction, and systems of support.

In this issue of *Bookends*, you'll find:

- A state-level overview from Angela Allen, OSPI Associate Director of Learning Standards, outlining the purpose and structure of the revision process.
- A leadership-focused perspective from AWSP Deputy Director Jack Arend, highlighting practical steps building leaders can take to implement revised standards effectively.

Together, these articles provide both context and application to support your work.

What Are the Washington State Learning Standards?

The Washington State Learning Standards establish grade-level expectations for what students should know and be able to do in each content area.

They guide:

- Curriculum alignment
- Instructional planning
- Classroom and district assessment
- School improvement efforts
- Student growth planning

The current revision process is designed to refine, clarify, and prioritize standards to support stronger alignment and consistency across the state.

When Are Revised Standards Implemented?

Revisions occur on a rolling basis by content area. As standards are finalized and adopted:

- Updated documents are posted on the OSPI website.
- Resources and supporting materials are released.
- Districts determine local timelines for alignment and implementation.
- Building leaders are encouraged to stay informed about revisions relevant to their grade levels and subject areas.

Official OSPI Learning Standards Review page:

Visit go.awsp.org/ospi-standards or scan the QR code below.



What Does This Mean for School Leaders?

Revised standards provide an opportunity to strengthen coherence across:

- Curriculum and assessment alignment (Criterion 4: Aligning Curriculum)

- Instructional supervision and feedback (Criterion 5: Improving Instruction)
- Data-informed school improvement planning (Criterion 3: Planning with Data)
- Equitable access to grade-level expectations (Criterion 8: Closing the Gap)

Rather than approaching revisions as an isolated task, leaders can integrate standards work into existing systems aligned with the AWSP Leadership Framework.

Where Can I Learn More?

AWSP partnered with Angela Allen, Associate Director of Learning Standards at OSPI, to provide webinars specifically designed for school leaders. Recordings of both sessions are available in the AWSP Learning Lab at go.awsp.org/standards or by scanning the QR code below.

These sessions provide an overview of the revision process, clarification of priority standards, and guidance for building-level implementation. Additional information, timelines, and resources are available through OSPI's Learning Standards Review webpage.





Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



AWSP
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SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Read on for a state-level overview of the learning standards from OSPI's Angela Allen and a leadership-focused perspective from AWSP's Jack Arend.





Angela Allen, Associate Director of Learning Standards, OSPI

Angela has been in K-12 education for 25 years and is currently the Associate Director of Learning Standards at OSPI.

Angela has been a high school teacher, dean of students, assistant high school principal, middle school principal, Director of Secondary and Alternative Instructional Leadership, and most recently a school superintendent.

At OSPI, Angela hopes to build connection throughout the agency as well as supporting educators and creating equity for our students around the state, using Learning Standards as the driver.



Learning Standards:

Unifying Educators in Instruction and Collaboration

What Are the Learning Standards?

Learning standards are the unifying connector for students and educators. They define what all students need to know and be able to do at the end of a grade level or course. Educators use the concepts and skills identified in the learning standards to plan instructional experiences, design lessons, interventions, and extensions, and create classroom-based assessments to determine where a student is at in their understanding of the content or skill identified in the standard.

When learning standards are used to support collaboration, acting as the foundation for conversations around student learning, lesson planning, and student supports needed for success, we get Collective Teacher Efficacy.

Collective Teacher Efficacy, identified as a top contributor to student achievement through the research of John Hattie, is teachers working together to collaborate and share effective practices that lead to student success. This translates in the school system as intentionally designed spaces and mechanisms for teachers to work and team together on the understanding of standards and planning instruction that meets the needs of all their learners.

Learning standards connect throughout the educational system in many ways. Standards are the foundation for educational assessments at the classroom, district, and state levels. They are connected to graduation credits, coding courses correctly, building Career and Technical Education equivalencies and frameworks, and supporting the locally determined

process of selecting and adopting district instructional materials. Learning standards also support the instructional and leadership frameworks for educators, principals, and assistant principals. It is through these frameworks that educators can understand how learning standards are aligned to student growth goals, and support alignment with instructional materials, instruction, assessment, professional practice, and much more.

One of the most important ways learning standards are used is to support students along a continuum of growth in their academic knowledge, skills and abilities. The learning standards should be used to help determine Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals in collaboration with general education educators, identify language supports for multilingual students to access the standards, and provide extensions for highly capable or students that already demonstrate proficiency on the standard. When educators and administrators have a deep understanding of learning standards, how they are used, how to plan for student needs, and how to assess if a student has demonstrated proficiency of grade level knowledge, skills, and abilities found in the learning standards, then the system is elevated. By knowing how to use the standards to create equitable learning experiences for all students, set teacher growth goals, collaborate together, and create focused school improvement goals, a coherent system is created.

Goals of Learning Standards Revision

OSPI is directed by the legislature (RCW 28A.655.070) to periodically revise the state learning standards. The goals of the review and revision project are to refine, prioritize, and clarify the standards. A consistent format for documents to support educator and partner use of the learning standards are being developed. This includes standards organized in a Word document format and also available in a spreadsheet format for sorting and filtering. A consistent numbering and coding system across

all standards is being implemented to better understand how parts of the standard connect, supporting teachers that use multiple content areas and content integration.

Prioritization of the standards is being completed with the review and revision process. Priority standards are what all students in the state of Washington should have the opportunity to learn, understand, and demonstrate at the end of each grade level, grade band, or course, no matter what district or classroom they are in. These are the key standards that support students beyond a single test, school year, or post high school. The skills and knowledge are useful across multiple subjects and they prepare students for success in later experiences. The Priority Standards should drive instructional decisions, including intervention and enrichment, ensuring all students are held to the same grade-level expectations and given equal access to content, strategies, and skills necessary for their proficiency of the standard. Educators are encouraged to center student assets, strengths and needs in determining how to offer opportunities to meet and demonstrate learning of the Priority Standards. This allows educators to inform their instruction, collaboration structures, and alignment around assessments and learning experiences for students. It also allows educational partners to develop professional learning opportunities and resources to support high quality instruction.

Educator Feedback Opportunities

Educator feedback is an essential part of the learning standards review and revision process. The initial step to starting the process is to survey educators about the current set of learning standards. This helps to gauge use, needs, and supports that educators are looking for in the standards. Combined with current research around the content area the survey results help determine next steps in the review and revision process. Educator feedback is sought throughout the process of the standards drafting and

revision through work groups, opportunities offered through ESD partners, public comment, and through initial adoption surveys before standards are finalized.

Stay Up To Date

As the learning standards review and revision process moves through the timeline for each of the content areas educators should keep checking the OSPI website to look for opportunities to engage with the learning standards work, and find videos, resources to support building implementation, surveys, and upcoming events or webinars. Be sure to check for opportunities for professional learning offered through educational partners: AWSP, ESDs, WEA, and WASA. There will be more information shared on learning standards at the Summer Conference in Spokane. ■

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.



Leading Learning Standards Implementation in Your Building

Jack Arend, Deputy Director, AWSP

Revised learning standards provide clarity about what students are expected to know and be able to do. But clarity alone does not improve outcomes. The real work begins in buildings—where principals and assistant principals translate standards

into aligned curriculum, instructional practice, assessment, and systems of support.

The AWSP Leadership Framework provides a natural structure for this work. When leaders intentionally connect standards implementation to specific criteria and components, coherence replaces compliance—and momentum replaces overload.

“Standards don’t implement themselves. Leadership determines whether they live in binders or in classrooms.”

On the following pages are leadership moves grounded in the Framework to help guide implementation.

1. Start with Curriculum Alignment

Criterion 4: Aligning Curriculum

Component 4.1 – Assists staff in aligning curriculum to state and local district learning goals

Component 4.2 – Assists staff in aligning instructional practices to state standards and district learning goals

Component 4.3 – Assists staff in aligning assessment practices to state standards and district learning goals

Revised standards demand more than distribution—they require alignment.

Implementation begins by ensuring the “written,” “taught,” and “assessed” curriculum are coherent and responsive.

Leadership Actions:

- Facilitate staff identification of essential learnings within the revised standards.
- Ensure common curriculum documents reflect updated standards.
- Align common formative and summative assessments to priority content.
- Review instructional practices to ensure rigor and responsiveness.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

BASIC:

Conversations about revised standards begin, but alignment work is inconsistent across grade levels or departments.

PROFICIENT:

Leaders systematically facilitate curriculum alignment activities across grade levels and content areas. Staff identify essential stan-

dards and adjust instruction and assessment accordingly.

DISTINGUISHED:

Teachers assume ownership of alignment work. Collaboration is ongoing and self-sustaining. Adjustments to curriculum, instruction, and assessment occur proactively based on student evidence.

2. Anchor the Work in Instructional Supervision

Criterion 5: Improving Instruction

Component 5.1 – Uses adopted instructional framework to monitor and support effective instruction and assessment practices

Component 5.3 – Assists staff in developing required student growth plans and identifying valid, reliable sources of evidence of effectiveness

Revised standards should show up in classrooms—and in feedback conversations.

Leaders play a critical role in ensuring that instructional supervision reflects the expectations embedded in updated standards.

Leadership Actions:

- Incorporate standards alignment into walkthrough look-fors.
- Connect observation feedback to standards-based learning targets.
- Ensure student growth goals reflect updated expectations.
- Use PLC time to examine student evidence tied directly to standards.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

BASIC:

Standards are mentioned in observation conversations but not consistently connected to instructional feedback.

PROFICIENT:

Feedback is clearly anchored to the adopted instructional framework and aligned to stan-

dards-based outcomes. Student growth goals reflect priority expectations.

DISTINGUISHED:

Teachers independently use standards to reflect on instructional effectiveness and adjust practice. Conversations about student learning are consistently standards-based and evidence-driven.

3. Use Data to Drive Coherent Implementation

Criterion 3: Planning with Data

Component 3.1 – Recognizes and seeks out multiple data sources

Component 3.3 – Creates data-driven plans for improved teaching and learning

Component 3.4 – Implements data-informed improvement plans

Revised standards should sharpen—not scatter—school improvement efforts.

Instead of layering initiatives, leaders can use the revision process as an opportunity to tighten focus.

Leadership Actions:

- Identify specific standards clusters connected to existing school improvement goals.
- Disaggregate performance data tied to those standards.
- Develop short- and long-term plans to strengthen implementation.
- Regularly monitor progress and adjust accordingly.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

BASIC:

Data related to standards is collected but not systematically connected to improvement plans.

PROFICIENT:

Improvement plans clearly identify standards-based goals and measurable outcomes. Monitoring cycles are consistent.

DISTINGUISHED:

Staff independently analyze standards-based data and adjust instructional plans. The implementation process is shared and sustained across teams.

4. Ensure Access for Each Learner

Criterion 8: Closing the Gap

Component 8.1 – Assesses data and identifies barriers

Component 8.2 – Creates plans to dismantle barriers and increase achievement

Standards define grade-level expectations. Leadership ensures equitable access to them.

Implementation must include intentional examination of barriers that prevent students from reaching proficiency.

Leadership Actions:

- Analyze standards-based performance by subgroup.
- Identify opportunity gaps connected to specific standards.
- Align intervention and enrichment systems to grade-level expectations.
- Monitor disproportionality in access to rigorous content.

What This Looks Like in Practice:

BASIC:

Achievement gaps are acknowledged but not consistently connected to standards-based planning.

PROFICIENT:

Leaders identify key barriers to proficiency and implement plans targeting those barriers.

DISTINGUISHED:

Staff independently analyze subgroup data tied to standards and lead improvement efforts. A culture of shared ownership for equitable outcomes is evident.

5. Protect Time and Manage Resources Strategically

Criterion 6: Managing Resources

Component 6.3 – Assigning staff

Component 6.4 – Managing fiscal resources

Standards implementation requires disciplined allocation of time and attention.

Leadership Actions:

Leaders must ask:

- Are staff assignments aligned to student needs?
- Are fiscal resources supporting standards-based instruction?
- Is collaboration time protected for alignment work?

What This Looks Like in Practice:

BASIC:

Resources loosely support standards implementation.

PROFICIENT:

Staff assignments and fiscal decisions are strategically aligned to student needs and standards-based priorities.

DISTINGUISHED:

Staff and leadership share responsibility for ensuring resources consistently support improved teaching and learning aligned to standards.

Immediate Action Steps for Building Leaders

Within 30 Days

- Convene leadership team to review revised standards.
- Identify high-leverage shifts affecting curriculum and instruction.
- Communicate a clear implementation focus to staff.

This Semester

- Embed standards alignment into PLC protocols.
- Adjust walkthrough tools to reflect updated expectations.
- Align professional learning to identified needs.

By Next School Year

- Ensure school improvement goals reflect priority standards.

- Confirm student growth goals align with updated expectations.
- Monitor standards-based performance trends across student groups.

Final Thought

Revised standards offer more than updated language—they offer an opportunity to strengthen coherence across curriculum, instruction, assessment, supervision, and improvement planning.

When building leaders intentionally align implementation to the AWSP Leadership Framework, standards become embedded in daily practice rather than layered on top of it.

Standards define expectations.
Leadership defines impact. ■

AWSP Deputy Director Jack Arend joined the AWSP team in 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.



Cispus Magic

How AWSL and the Cispus Learning Center are Better Together

James Layman, Director,
Association of Washington
Student Leaders (AWSL)

Chase Buffington, Director,
Cispus Learning Center



Article Photo Credit: Alexis Espinoza



There is a word we hear again and again from students and adults who come to Cispus through AWSL programs. *Magic.*

They call it “Cispus Magic.” And if you have ever stood under the tall trees, shared a meal in the dining hall, or watched students who arrived as strangers leave as friends, you know exactly what they mean.

The magic is real. But it is not a trick. It is not smoke and mirrors. It is connection. It is belonging. It is humanity.

Read on to find out what makes Cispus and AWSL’s student programs so magical.

How Did Cispus Begin?

The land that holds the Cispus Learning Center has a rich and powerful history. The site was first built in the early 1930s as a Civilian Conservation Corps camp during the New Deal era. If you visit today, you can still see pieces of that history. The chimney and shell of the Sasquatch Lounge still stand strong, reminding us that this place has always been about building something that lasts.

In 1966, Cispus was remodeled and transformed into a Job Corps training site in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. A few years later, when funding challenges threatened the program, Washington State Superintendent Louis Bruno saw something more. He saw potential for environmental education. That vision led to the creation of the Cispus Environmental Education Center.

In 1981, the Association of Washington School Principals stepped in to lead the facility through its nonprofit wing, the Washington School Principals' Education Foundation. Through a lease agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, the work continued. The mission grew. The impact deepened.

And today, Cispus is home to the Association of Washington Student Leaders.

That is where the magic truly multiplies.

The Magic of Bringing Student Leaders Together

AWSL programs and camps bring thousands of students from across Washington to Cispus every year. Middle schoolers. High school leaders. Emerging voices. Advisors. Principals. Students from big cities and small rural towns. Students who have held leadership titles for years and students who are just discovering their voice.

They all come together.

At AWSL, we focus on culture, community, and connection. We believe leadership is not about position. It is about people. It is about how we treat each other. It is about how we build schools where every student feels seen and valued.

And there is something about Cispus that makes this work come alive. Maybe it is the mountains. Maybe it is the river nearby. Maybe it is the way cell service fades, and real conversations begin. Maybe it is the history in the walls of the Sasquatch Lounge.

But most of all, it is the shared experience. At Cispus, students share meals at long tables. They laugh together. They reflect together. They sing. They problem solve. They sit in circles and tell their stories. They step into courage. They practice listening. They live and learn communally.



Students enjoy the full Cispus experience on the challenge course.

That is where the magic takes shape. When you wake up in a cabin with students from different schools, when you cheer for each other during activities, when you stay up just a little too late talking about your dreams for your school, something shifts.

Walls come down.
Friendships form.
Confidence grows.

Entering as strangers and departing as friends is not rare at Cispus. It is common. It is expected. It is part of the design.

The unifying experiences that emerge from AWSL camps are profound. Students begin to see that they are not alone. Advisors are reminded why they do this work. Principals see what is possible when students are trusted and empowered.

That is magic.

Cispus: Not a Noun, But a Way of Being

Cispus is not just a location for AWSL. It is woven into our DNA. The space shapes our programs. And the space is shaped by the people who gather there.

For decades, students have walked those paths, sat in those meeting spaces, and stood in that dining hall. They have wrestled with big questions about belonging. They have learned



Cispus kitchen staff work hard preparing homemade meals for Cispus guests.

how to lead with empathy. They have built plans to transform their school culture. They return home different.

More confident.

More connected.

More aware of the power they hold to create change.

And they bring that magic back with them.

Better Together

In today's world, schools are working hard to build strong cultures. We talk about climate. We talk about belonging. We talk about student voice. These are not trends. They are the foundation of student success. AWSL and Cispus offer something unique. Not a one-hour assembly. Not a quick training. But an immersive experience where students and adults grow together.

When schools send students to AWSL camps at Cispus, they are investing in more than a few days away. They are investing in leaders who will return with deeper empathy, stronger relationships, and practical tools to strengthen their school community.

They are investing in culture.

They are investing in connection.

They are investing in magic.

The beauty of the relationship be-



Cispus hosts the largest challenge course in the PNW allowing students to engage critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills.



Students forge meaningful and life-long connections through AWSL programs at Cispus.

tween AWSL and Cispus is simple. We are better together.

Cispus provides the majestic setting and the historic foundation. AWSL brings the leadership framework, the intentional programming, and the heart for students. Together, they create an experience that is hard to explain but easy to feel.

You feel it when a shy student finds their voice.

You feel it when a group from different corners of the state links arms and sings.

You feel it when an advisor wipes away a quiet tear after watching their students step into something bigger than themselves.

That is Cispus magic.

And it is waiting for the next group of students and educators who are ready to experience it. Because when we gather in a place built on history, rooted in connection, and focused on belonging, something beautiful happens.

*We discover that leadership is human.
We discover that we are not alone.
We discover that we are, truly, better together.*

If you want to be part of the magic, help send AWSL students across the state to leadership camp, consider donating at Cispus Forever—a scholarship creator that reduces barriers for students to dream big. ■

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. He is now Director of AWSL.



Chase joined the Cispus Learning Center in 2009, serving two years as its Challenge Course Manager. In 2014, he accepted the position of General Manager and, in 2019, took over as Cispus Director.



AWSP & You: The Perfect Pair

David Morrill, Communications and Technology Director, AWSP

Better together. It's not just our Summer Conference theme; it's our core belief at AWSP. Our mission has always been to support principals, assistant principals, and the principalship (all of you and the profession as a whole) in the education of each and every student. We support you, and you support us. It's that whole Jerry Maguire, "Help me, help you" thing you've probably seen us use a time or two. Let's explore the ways we're better together.

Summer Conference

Celebrate your year and get inspired for the next one with AWSP and WASA's Annual Summer Conference. This year's conference is June 28-30 in Spokane. From inspirational and informative keynotes, learning from one of our 70+ breakout sessions led by your peers, networking with colleagues, and finding solutions in the exhibit hall, the Summer Conference has something for everyone. (Learn more about each of our keynoters starting on page 19!)

Advocacy

Of all the work we do on your behalf, nothing carries the impact that advocacy does. From trying to curb unfunded mandates, passing student- and education-friendly legislation, and strengthening relationships with our partners, advocacy efforts help make improvements for current school leaders and students, and for those coming after them. We need your involvement and stories to carry your messaging, and of course, legislators want to hear directly from those leading schools every day.

Just as important as our partnership with legislators is our partnership with other agencies and associations. From our strong state-level partnerships with Office of Superintendent of Pub-

lic Instruction, State Board of Education, Professional Educator Standards Board, and our colleagues at the Washington Association of School Administrators (just to name a few), we ensure principal voice is at every table. In the spirit of better together, AWSP membership will soon have a single, united national membership that represents the same PK-12+ spectrum as the members we serve in our state. A leading member of the School Leader Collaborative, the work in Washington helps inform and is informed by other associations around the country.

AWSP Leadership Networks & Professional Learning

Leadership can be lonely, but it doesn't have to be. Our Leadership Networks are designed to connect you with colleagues across the state, enabling you to support and learn from one another. Whether featuring a guest speaker or tackling a problem of practice, there's a network of support just waiting for you. And of course, our professional learning is designed for busy adult learners. We offer traditional in-person cohort models, live webinars and virtual classes, and on-demand courses to help you earn the Leadership and Equity Clock Hours you need to sharpen your leadership and maintain your certificate.

Student Growth Goal Revisions

One of the first things that comes to mind when they think about our organization is the AWSP Leadership Framework. Not long ago, the TPEP Steering Committee led the revision of the Student Growth Goals for Teachers. This past spring, a committee of principals, assistant principals, and partners took on that charge for the Leadership Framework's Student Growth Goals. Not only did the prac-

itioner voice improve the goals, but your feedback will help ensure they're on target and, hopefully, have a measurable impact on student learning.

Member Survey

The response rate for the 2026 Member Survey has been phenomenal. Our survey asks about job satisfaction, what's going well, what we should prioritize to support you, your thoughts on AWSP, and how the job impacts your work/life balance. This data helps us tell your story and chart our course. Your voice, our work; better together.

AWSP Involvement

Last but not least, we are led by amazing groups of principals and assistant principals just like you. One of the most consistent things we've heard over the years is that serving on an AWSP Board or Grade Level Leadership Committee has been the best professional development our board or committee members have ever had. It might not feel like you have the time, energy, or capacity to serve, but it might be just what you need. The friendships, the connections, and the learning from one another truly embody the spirit of better together. We don't exist without you. Whether you're actively involved with AWSP, tune in here or there, or this article is the first thing you've ever read from us, we're always here for you. We know school leadership is one of the most rewarding and most challenging careers on the planet, and you shouldn't do it alone. Reach out anytime; our team is always ready to make things better, together. ■

David Morrill is AWSP's Communications and Technology Director. He joined AWSP in 2013 after working for OSPI, where he worked on education finance and TPEP during its pilot phase.





Better **TOGETHER**

Leading with Purpose. Connecting with Heart.

Summer Conference Keynote Speaker Highlights

Each year for 44 years, AWSP and WASA have brought together principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and district office staff from across the state to attend the Annual Summer Conference. We hope you'll consider joining us this year on June 28-30 in Spokane.

To give you a sneak peek of the conference content, we asked each keynote speaker to contribute an article to this issue of *Bookends*.

This year's theme, "Better Together: Leading with Purpose, Connecting with Heart," reminds us that our work is strongest when principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and central office leaders move forward as one. The challenges we face in education are complex, but our collective commitment to students grounds and guides us. Join us this summer as we learn, reflect, and reconnect—because when we lead together, everyone benefits.

Read on for articles from each of our keynote speakers and learn why each

of them was chosen to present at this particular conference:

Brad Montague, Author and Creator of the hit web series *Kid President*

Carlos Ojeda Jr., Motivational Speaker and Youth Development Expert, CoolSpeak

Sandy Zimmerman, Inspirational Speaker, Coach, Author, and American Ninja Warrior Competitor



Brad Montague

Author and Creator of the hit web series Kid President

Brad Montague is a New York Times bestselling author of books for kids and former kids. He is creator of the web series *Kid President*, *The Circles All Around Us*, and, most recently, *The Fantastic Bureau of Imagination*. Brad lives in Tennessee with his wife and kids. He can currently be seen as the host of the television special “The Kindness Project” on The Magnolia Network via Max. As a storyteller, his inspiring stories and imaginative resources are used in classrooms around the world daily.

Brad will present as a keynote speaker at the AWSP/WASA Summer Conference on Sunday, June 28. Learn more at www.awsp.org/SC.

The Stubborn Optimist: When School and District Leaders Gather, Great Things Happen

Note: This article was transcribed and adapted from a video Brad Montague created for AWSP members who attended a Grade Level Leadership Committee meeting earlier this year. His message still applies and he looks forward to presenting to school and district leaders at the Summer Conference this June! Scan the QR code at the end of this article to watch Brad's full video.

It's an honor to send this message to all of you there in Washington. Thank you for everything you're doing—for kids, with kids, for students, with students, for educators, with educators, for parents and caregivers, and with them who bless you.

School leaders, you are the unsung heroes of education. I mean, teachers get apples, students get recess, and you get emails—emails with subject lines like, “Urgent cafeteria incident.” So that's something.

I hope you can make it to the Summer

Conference, and I hope your time at the Summer Conference is encouraging for you. You get to be together, you get to gather. And what does it look like when a whole bunch of school and district administrators come together? It's a frightening idea to many, but I hope it's encouraging to you, because we need you. And I'm so glad you're doing the work you're doing.

This is a drawing I did of a ladybug. One ladybug is really cool, but did you know that when a whole bunch of ladybugs come together, there's a word for that? It's not just “ladybugs.”

No. The collective noun is *a loveliness*. Isn't that perfect?

Similarly, one hummingbird is beautiful and magical and enchanting. But a whole bunch of them all together is called a *shimmer* or a *charm*.

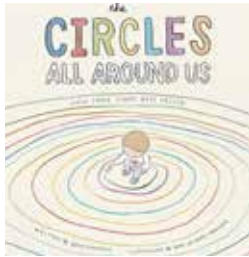
But *you*. What do we call all of you when you come together, when a whole bunch of school and district leaders from Washington come together?



I asked a few students, and they said that maybe it's called a havoc of headmasters, or they call it an assembly. Whatever it is, I'm glad you're getting together. It's a big deal that you'll be together. You are people who understand how much it matters to show up for kids. You're caring. You're present. You're leading in a way that points people towards what's possible.

The Circles All Around Us

My wife Kristi and I create several books together. I'm a writer and illustrator and I love stories. As a storyteller, I get to spend time in classrooms all over the US. There's a key thing I've learned about classrooms and schools that are great: They don't happen by accident. They happen because there's somebody who is thoughtful, somebody who cares. They happen because of leaders like you.



I wrote a book called *The Circles All Around Us*, and the whole idea is that these circles start right around you as the leader. They're with you everywhere you go. Under your leadership, circles of care grow and grow. And we need that. One in three kids deals with anxiety to such a degree that they cannot function. *One in three kids*.

Fail-a-bration

Those statistics are part of why another children's book project of ours has been so important to my wife and I: *Fail-a-bration*.



The book has led to Fail-a-bration parties in every state. My wife and I also just completed an art show around the book that's on display in Michigan called "We Hope You Fail Better." (Which, you know, sounds like

a very southern way of saying, "We hope you feel better." But, being from Tennessee, that is how we speak.)

The book and project started because I've been learning that there's this pressure cooker of perfection that all of us are in—schools, students, and grown-ups. In response, we threw a party called a "Fail-a-bration" in which all my friends were invited who've done really impressive things, but they couldn't talk about any of it. Instead, they had to give talks about all their projects that went wrong, all the things that went sideways in their lives. It was like a TED Talk, but really terrible. And what happened is, we laughed. We had fun, we connected, we found out that we were all human, and it was really meaningful and profound.

The theme of the whole party was imperfection and failure. So even when writing out your name tag, you would put the wrong name. So if your name's Bryan, you'd put Brain. My name is Brad. So mine said Bread. And, and in doing that, people were already uncomfortable doing something purposely wrong. It's hard—especially for people who do so much right. And yet there is freedom in doing something purposefully wrong just to pop that bubble of perfection. And that is the premise behind our book *Fail-a-bration*.

A Community of Growth

A lot of really sad stories start with, "That conversation didn't go the way I thought it would go. That person's trajectory didn't go the way I thought it would go. My own life isn't going the way I thought it would go."

I'm finding the only way through that is for us to have a community where we can discuss and share those feelings. In elementary school, I really thought I was a failure. Part of that is because I had an educator tell me I wasn't good at math, so I just believed her. I'm just not good at math. Now, that's not a thing any of you would say to a child, because we understand the growth mindset. You might say you're not good at math yet.

Which leads me to one of the next concepts I'm really fascinated and inspired by: a lot of educators are realizing it's not just about the growth mindset for the individual. One of psychologist Carol Dweck's own students asked, "If growth mindset is about the individual, what is it for a whole group of people? What would that look like?" And they coined this term, *a community of growth*.

What does it look like for a whole bunch of people to grow and help each other grow? That's exactly what a school culture is. It's a place where we grow and help each other grow. It starts with leaders like you who make that possible, who nurture the space, who water the space, who create the space for students and staff to thrive.

Better Together

I hope during the Summer Conference that you feel cared for. I hope the theme of *Better Together* helps you realize how much you matter. And I hope today you realize you can fail better and that you can learn and help each other learn.

Whatever you decide to call a gathering of school and district leaders, I hope you know you all make me a stubborn optimist. I've read the news. I'm aware of all the challenges. But, like one of my favorite poets Wendell Berry said, "Be joyful, though you've considered all the facts." I'm aware of all the facts, but I am also a stubborn optimist because, well, there's you.

So thanks so much for being who you are, where you are, and doing all the things you're doing for children. It's a gift to be able to send you this message. You help us all see glimpses of the world as it could be. And that's the truth. See you at the Summer Conference, friends! ■



Scan me



Carlos Ojeda, Jr.

*Motivational Speaker and Youth Development Expert,
CoolSpeak*

Carlos Ojeda Jr. is a youth development expert with over 26 years of experience inspiring countless students, parents, and education professionals across the country. Carlos was a university administrator, professor, and the director of the small business development center at Kutztown University where he honed his skills in leadership and education. Combining his entrepreneurial spirit with his passion for changing the lives of youth across the country, he started CoolSpeak: The Youth Engagement Company.

Carlos will present as a keynote speaker at the AWSP/WASA Summer Conference on Monday, June 29, and also as a pre-conference presenter on June 28. Learn more at www.awsp.org/SC.

Better Together: Leading with Purpose and Connecting with Heart

Spring is a demanding season for school leaders. Academic pressures intensify, staffing realities persist, and the emotional needs of students and staff do not slow down. It is also the time of year when even the most dedicated educators may quietly begin to question their impact.

Recently, after speaking to a large group of high school students, a teacher approached me and shared an honest reflection: "Sometimes it feels like what I say doesn't matter."

That statement captures a tension many educators experience. Research consistently shows that teachers have a profound and lasting influence on

students' lives. Most adults can name an educator who boosted their confidence, encouraged their dreams, or altered the direction of their future. Yet in the day-to-day demands of leading a classroom or a building, that long-term impact can feel distant and unseen.

Connection Matters

There is often a gap between measurable influence and personal feeling.

Closing that gap is at the heart of what I bring to this year's Summer Conference theme: *Better Together: Leading with Purpose. Connecting with Heart*. Several years ago, after a presentation, I noticed a student standing quietly

apart from her peers. I made a simple comment acknowledging something unique about her. It was a brief exchange, but later she shared that she was navigating deep personal loss and emotional hardship. What stayed with me was not the length of the interaction, but its significance. She did not need a speech. She needed to be seen.

That experience reinforced a critical truth for school leaders: small moments matter. Words matter. Presence matters. Connection matters.

Students today are navigating complex pressures including academic expectations, identity development, mental health challenges, and uncertainty

about their future. At the same time, educators carry enormous responsibility: student outcomes, community trust, staff morale, and institutional performance. Both groups are working hard. Both are navigating weight. And both want the same thing, to know that they matter.

Authentic Relationship Building

When educators feel unseen or unsupported, they begin to question their impact. When students feel unseen, they begin to question their worth. But when leaders intentionally align purpose with heart, something shifts. When schools are guided by clear vision and reinforced by authentic relationships, students respond differently. Teachers led differently. Conversations become more constructive. The climate of a building strengthens not because of a single initiative, but because connection becomes foundational rather than incidental.

Being “better together” is not simply about collaboration. It is about coherence. It is about ensuring that policies, expectations, and daily interactions reinforce a shared belief in dignity, belonging, and meaningful contribution.

Feeling VS. Impact

This summer, our conversation will center on practical strategies for



Carlos created a video to accompany this article and further emphasize the importance of relationship-building and connection. Watch at <https://clspk.com/bookends>.

narrowing the gap between what educators feel and the impact they are truly making. We will explore how to cultivate cultures of encouragement within leadership teams, how to create psychologically safe spaces for students, and how to sustain purpose-driven leadership in demanding seasons.

Schools do not flourish because of programs alone. They flourish when purpose and connection operate side by side.

When students and educators are seen, heard, and valued—together—schools move beyond simply functioning. They begin to thrive.

To hear more about this message and the heart behind it, I encourage you to watch the accompanying video message as preview of the ideas we will explore more deeply this summer. Scan the QR below to access the video, or visit <https://clspk.com/bookends>.



I look forward to continuing this conversation with you this summer. ■

PRE-CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY ON JUNE 28 | CARLOS OJEDA JR., COOLSPEAK



Being Cool and Making It HIP: How to Lead High Impact Cultures of Connection, Engagement, and Belonging

Not only will Carlos Ojeda Jr. present as a keynoter on Monday, June 29, he is also offering a half-day **pre-conference workshop on Sunday, June 28 from 9 a.m. - Noon**. The pre-con is an immersive leadership experience introducing the Cool + HIP framework to address disengagement and burnout. Participants will gain practical tools to design high-impact student-centered programming that strengthens connection, engagement and belonging. Includes 3 Leadership clock hours. Cost is \$250. Learn more and register at www.awsp.org/SC.



Sandy Zimmerman

Inspirational Speaker, Coach, and Author

Sandy Zimmerman is a former physical education teacher and mother of three who has competed on nine seasons of American Ninja Warrior. She is known for being the first mom to finish the course and hit the buzzer in the show's history. Sandy has also been a motivational speaker, author, and TEDx speaker, sharing her inspiring journey and impact on others. She has appeared on various media platforms, including The Kelly Clarkson Show and CNN Entertainment. Sandy's story is a testament to her resilience and determination, as she has overcome numerous obstacles throughout her life.

Sandy will present as a keynote speaker at the AWSP/WASA Summer Conference on Tuesday, June 30. Learn more at www.awsp.org/SC.

Be Like Selkirk: The Power of Connections in Education

I am honored to be a part of this year's Summer Conference and the theme, *Better Together: Leading with Purpose. Connecting with Heart*. This event holds special significance for me, not only because of its importance in the field of education, but also due to my personal connections with some of the people who have shaped my journey.

Among those who have helped shape my path are Kim Carlson, my former high school principal, and his wife, Mrs. Carlson, who was my high school volleyball coach. They have remained important figures in my life. Just a few months ago, Mrs. Carlson sent me a text that read, "He's retired but still kinda in education," accompanied by a photo of Kim snuggled up with his two grandkids and his dog reading a book. This simple message reminded me of the enduring impact educators can have long after their title of principal ends.



Sandy Zimmerman's former principal, Kim Carlson, retired from the principalship but not from education. He's pictured here reading to his grandkids.

What Do You Hope Students Remember about You?

In preparing for this keynote, I reached out to Mr. Carlson with a question:

“What are three things you hope students will remember about you?”

At the same time, I reflected on what three things I personally remember about having Mr. Carlson as my principal. I was curious to see if there would be any overlap between his hopes and my memories. This led me to reflect on an important question for all educators: Will what you hope students remember about you align with what they actually remember?

It's about Hope and Student Investment

Statistically, my life today defies the odds. Many children who grow up in poverty, are reliant on welfare, and spend time in the foster care system face overwhelming challenges in achieving a bright, healthy future. Yet hope exists when even one caring adult forms a meaningful relationship with a child. I have been incredibly blessed to have several caring adults invest in me, especially those from the community at Selkirk High School. Their love, care, and support during those formative high school years made all the difference for me.

School was my happy place growing up, the one place where I always felt safe and could simply be a kid. School brought incredible mentors and role models into my life as well as friends and teammates who gave me a sense of community and connection. School gave me so many incredible opportunities, like the opportunity to get a great college education. The full ride scholarship I received to attend Gonzaga University was my ticket out of poverty and a rough life, it literally changed my family tree. Even during tough times, like my struggles with reading and writing, school taught me valuable life lessons in grit, determination, hard work, and resilience. And



Mrs. and Mr. Carlson, Sandy Zimmerman's former volleyball coach and principal who retired from Selkirk High School in Lone, WA.

school helped me develop the courage and confidence needed to chase and achieve big dreams and goals.

This Summer, Renew Your “Why”

My hope for my keynote is that every attendee leaves with a clear understanding of their purpose, feels a renewed sense of inspiration for their “why,” and gains practical tools to build a culture where all students experience the same life-changing love and connections I did. The Selkirk community helped me defy the odds, ensuring I did not become just another statistic. Instead, they helped me to thrive not just in school but in my personal life as well.

As you reflect on your own school or district, consider this: What can you do today, and throughout the coming school year, to ensure that what students remember about you aligns with what you hope they remember? The impact you have on students' lives and the rippling effect it has for generations to come is profound. With intentional actions, you can foster a culture that values the essential relationships and connections needed to help all students succeed. ■



Still Need to Register for the 2026 Summer Conference?

If you'd like to hear more from each of the keynote speakers highlighted in this issue of *Bookends*—Brad Montague, Carlos Ojeda Jr., and Sandy Zimmerman—plan to join us at the **AWSP/WASA Summer Conference June 28-30 in Spokane.**

There's still time to register! Find out more and get signed up at www.awsp.org/SC or scan the QR code below.



Use 2025-26 TPEP Funds for Summer Conference

Did you know districts can use 2025-26 TPEP funds (FP 664 in EGMS) to pay for conference registration and travel expenses? Check with your district to see if funds are available before registering.

The **Work Ahead**

Turning a Difficult Session into
Momentum for *Change*

Roz Thompson,
Government Relations and
Advocacy Director, AWSP



The Legislature adjourned on March 12, bringing the 2026 legislative session to a close. As always, the end of session brings a mix of emotions—pride in the moments where our advocacy helped shape policy, relief when some proposals did not move forward, and frustration when critical issues did not receive the attention or funding they deserve. This year’s session was particularly challenging, marked by significant fiscal pressures and divided perspectives on how to address a substantial budget shortfall.

Legislators adopted a supplemental operating budget for 2025–27 that relies in part on one-time solutions and fund transfers to maintain overall balance. While the budget preserves maintenance level funding for basic education, it does not keep pace with the rising and real costs that districts are facing. Targeted reductions to several K–12 programs like Transition to Kindergarten reflect the difficult choices lawmakers made, and they also reinforce a more concerning reality: Washington’s current funding system is not adequately meeting the needs of its public schools.

This session highlighted ongoing debates about the state’s long-term revenue structure and priorities.

Democrats passed the “millionaire’s tax” and intend for some of the future revenue to be used for additional K–12 funding. But uncertainty remains, not only about the reality of collecting this tax, but also about whether future revenues will translate into meaningful, sustained investments in K–12 education. Across the political spectrum, there is clear disagreement—not only about how much to spend, but about where and how those dollars should be directed.

Throughout the session, one thing remained constant: the importance of real stories. In conversations with legislators, it is not always the spreadsheets or data points that resonate most—it is the lived experiences of students, educators, school leaders, and families. The challenges of staffing, student mental health, special education services, transportation, and workload helped ground the policy discussions and ensured that, even in a difficult budget year, the voices of our school leaders were part of the conversation.

Unfortunately, districts across Washington will continue to face structural budget deficits, with significant gaps in funding for core components of basic education, including special education,

“Throughout the session, one thing remained constant: the importance of real stories. In conversations with legislators, it is not always the spreadsheets or data points that resonate most—it is the lived experiences of students, educators, school leaders, and families.”

materials and operating costs, transportation, and staffing. These are not new challenges, and they will not be resolved through incremental changes in a supplemental budget. They require a sustained, statewide commitment to reexamine how we define and fund basic education.



Many of AWSP’s Advocacy Advisory Council and Board members gathered in Olympia this January for AWSP’s annual “Day on the Hill.”



School leaders met with legislators and spoke up for what schools need to serve students well during AWSP's annual "Day on the Hill."



Melissa Super-Greene, Principal at South Kitsap High School (left) meets with AWSP Director of Government Relations and Advocacy Roz Thompson at the Capitol.

Looking ahead, the months between now and the 2027 legislative session will be critical. Three different K-12 funding workgroups will continue to meet, and there is growing discussion about potential legal action centered on whether the state is once again falling short of its constitutional obligation to fully fund public education. It is essential that the perspectives of school leaders are part of these conversations because they will help shape the budget and policy landscape for years to come.

Elections this fall will also play a significant role in shaping that future, with all House seats and half of the Senate on the ballot. The legislators elected will make key decisions about funding, policy, and priorities for our schools.

Building and maintaining strong relationships with policymakers—through meetings, school visits, and ongoing communication—will continue to be an important part of our advocacy strategy.

In the months ahead, we will also be advancing our own agenda. This includes elevating recommendations from our Future School Leaders Workgroup to OSPI for consideration in the decision package next fall, continuing programs like "Principal for a Day," and expanding direct outreach to legislators through our "Principal Partners for Legislators" program.

As we move forward, your voice remains the most important tool we have. Personal stories—about what is

"Looking ahead, the months between now and the 2027 legislative session will be critical. It is essential that the perspectives of school leaders are part of these conversations because they will help shape the budget and policy landscape for years to come."

working, what is not, and what students truly need—cut through political complexity and bring clarity to difficult decisions. What supports or services are you no longer able to provide to students as a result of budget and staffing cuts? Your stories help policymakers understand that funding gaps are not just numbers on a page; they translate into larger class sizes, reduced staffing, fewer supports, and missed opportunities for students. The work ahead is significant, but so is the opportunity. By continuing to speak up, build relationships, and push for meaningful change, we can help ensure that the next legislative session moves us closer to a system that truly meets the needs of every student. Thank you for your work each day to support students and staff. If you would like to get involved in AWSP's advocacy efforts, please contact me at roz@awsp.org. ■

Roz Thompson is AWSP's Government Relations and Advocacy Director. Prior, Roz worked in the Tumwater School District.



“ASK A PRINCIPAL”

In October, we asked school leaders, “Who led you into leading?” Here are a few of the great responses we received:

“My second principal as a teacher, Lee Smith, led me into leading. He saw something in me and sat down with me to discuss what being a leader is about. He modeled patience, student-led decision-making, and desire to support the school community. He has since retired and I love to reach out and talk with him on occasion. He is still very connected with the school although he has been retired for over 17 years. I hope I have that same level of impact!”

- **Tyrone Robuck, Principal,
Purdy Elementary, Peninsula SD**

“Growing up in Chicago taught me resilience, grit, and the power of community—values that shaped my leadership journey. The United States Marine Corps refined those lessons through service, discipline, and excellence, and among a small but mighty circle of women Marines, I learned that leadership is about influence, example, and heart. Leaders like First Sergeant Messina, Staff Sergeant Vargas, and Sergeant Ramos modeled our values of honor, courage, and commitment while seeing strengths in me I hadn’t yet recognized. Their belief inspired me to grow and lead with purpose. Today, as a school leader, I carry those same values, leading with integrity, courage, and dedication while striving to see and nurture the potential in others, just as they did for me.”

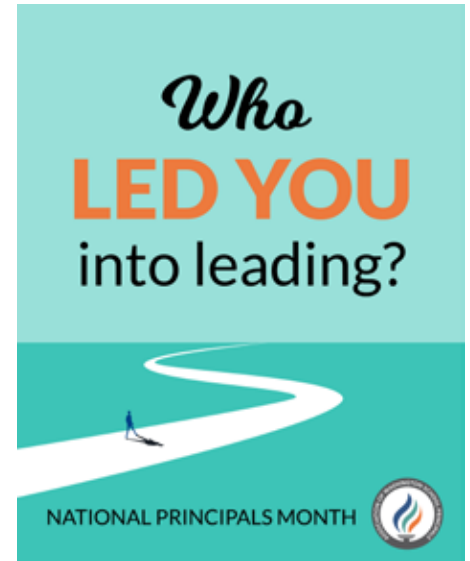
- **Salina Machida, Assistant
Principal, Tukes Valley Primary,
Battle Ground PS**

“When I was teaching during my 4th year in elementary, the principal told me I should consider admin. I laughed a lot at the time. It stuck somewhere though and as I began seeing the difference I was making in a classroom I wanted to do that in a building for my students to have a place where they knew they were loved and cared for. Here I am in year 25 education—but 3rd as middle school principal.”

- **Tina Mullings, Principal,
Ephrata Middle, Ephrata SD**

“Oddly enough it was 2016 and I was going through a year-long treatment for breast cancer. I went to work everyday and coached. It was during this time I realized the impact I had on my students. I realized the impact my coworkers and leadership had on me. Together I was able to get through my treatment and it and everyone involved inspired me to do more and become a leader. It was the look in some of my colleagues faces that told me keep going we need you, you are a natural leader. So I’d say it was an experience and everyone around me and that experience.”

- **Jennifer Godinho, Principal,
Castle Rock Intermediate,
Castle Rock SD**



“My grandmother (Georgia Malan) led me into leading. She was a principal for 30 years back in a time when very few women were principals. She would take me to her school to visit when I was young and the students would tell me how much they loved their principal and the reasons why. I felt so proud that she was my grandmother. I loved seeing what a positive impact she had on other kids besides her own grandkids. She inspired me to want to do the same for others.”

- **Aimee Miner, Principal,
Lake Forest Park Elementary,
Shoreline SD**

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



We'll post more fun prompts with prizes for National Principals Month in October, Member Engagement Month in February, and other special events.



**Dr. Scott Seaman,
Executive Director, AWSP**

School leadership has never been more demanding—or more important. Every day, principals and assistant principals across Washington are balancing the needs of students, staff, families, and communities while navigating an increasingly complex educational landscape. Since 1972, one of AWSP’s core responsibilities is making sure school leaders have the support, resources, and advocacy they need to do this work well.

Rooted in Service

Our roots go back even further. Programs now housed within our sister organization, the Washington School Principals Education Foundation (WSPEF), have supported students and leaders across the state since the 1950s. From the Cispus Learning Center to the work of the Association of Washington Student Leaders and Outdoor Schools Washington, these programs reflect a long-standing belief that strong

schools grow from strong leadership and meaningful student experiences.

Together, AWSP and WSPEF support leaders and students across Washington as the bookends of school culture. When students and adults work together to build positive school culture, the impact reaches far beyond the classroom.

**One Purpose:
Supporting Leaders
Across Every Level**

One of the defining characteristics of AWSP has always been our commitment to supporting leaders across the entire PK–12+ continuum. Whether you are an elementary assistant principal, a middle school principal, leading at the high school level, or running a K-12 school, AWSP exists to support your work and amplify your voice. That approach reflects the belief that while our schools may look different across grade levels, the challenges and opportunities of school leadership are deeply connected. Leaders learn from

one another, and our profession is stronger when those connections are encouraged.

**Aligning Nationally with
Our PK–12+ Model**

For many years, AWSP has partnered with two national organizations: the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Both organizations have provided support and resources for school leaders across the country, and we appreciate the longstanding partnerships we’ve had with them.

However, the national landscape has traditionally been divided between elementary and secondary representation. For states like Washington that operate as unified PK–12+ associations, that structure has sometimes created challenges.

Recently, NASSP’s Board voted to begin the transition to a fully PK–12+

“Our goal—at the state level and nationally—is to ensure school leaders have the support, resources, and representation they need to lead their communities well.”

organization. In July, they will rebrand as the National Principals Association. After careful discussion, the AWSP Board voted to align with that emerging model once the transition is complete.

The goal is simple: a national partner that reflects the same unified PK–12+ approach we use here in Washington.

An Aligned National Principals Association

For AWSP members, the most important thing to know is that your membership, benefits, and support remain unchanged. AWSP will contin-

ue to serve as your primary source of advocacy, professional learning, and member support.

The hope is that a unified national partner will help strengthen the collective voice of school leaders while aligning more closely with how many states, including Washington, already operate. Much like our Summer Conference theme, “Better Together,” starting in July, your national organization will mirror how AWSP has been supporting ALL principals, and the principalship, in the education of each and every student. The needs of elementary, middle, and high school leaders should be reflected in programs, publications, awards, and advocacy in one national association.

How Will This Matter to You?

We’ve often said school leadership is one of the best jobs in the world, and one of the most demanding and important roles in education. The responsibilities placed on principals and assistant principals continue to grow, even as the research reminds us how central strong leadership is to student success.

Our goal — at the state level and nationally — is to ensure school leaders have the support, resources, and representation they need to lead their communities well.

As our Summer Conference theme reminds us, we are Better Together. When elementary, middle, and high school leaders share ideas, experienc-

es, and challenges, our entire profession benefits.

Thank you for the work you do each day for students, staff, and communities across Washington. If you have questions about the national transition or anything else AWSP is working on, please don’t hesitate to reach out. Thank you and keep up the great work for kids! ■

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.



MEET THE NATIONAL PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

NASSP has put together a webpage with helpful information explaining their transition to a PK–12+ National Principals Association. You’ll find a video message from NASSP CEO Ronn Nozoe.

The page outlines what’s changing and what will stay the same, and shares a timeline of the road to NPA. There’s a section of frequently asked questions for both members and state affiliates. Scan the QR code below to access the page, or visit go.awsp.org/NPA.



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