

**ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
WRAP-UP &
PHOTOS!**


WSSDA

direct

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2019

Mabton's Journey

Mabton's board chair describes her district's journey, p. 12. Defining Words—making meaning in conversations on equity, p. 6. WSSDA 2.0 gets real, p. 4. OnBoard debuts to rave reviews, p. 6. A wild sense of hope, p. 7.>> And more!



From the Executive Director

Building a culture of connecting

Welcome to the winter issue of *Direct*! You're going to see a lot in here about the 2019 WSSDA Annual Conference because a lot of great things happened. The theme this year was "Culture of Connecting," and our keynote speakers did a great job of teasing out what that means while encouraging us to make our own connections.

First, we were very fortunate to have three outstanding local keynoters. John Norlin, Erin Jones, and Washington Teacher of the Year Robert Hand each delivered inspiring and instructive messages. They also allowed us to record them for you and display them at wssda.org/2019keynotes.

Another feature of the conference was our annual Boards of Distinction and Boards of the Year awards ceremonies. The purpose of the awards isn't the accolades; it's practicing what we know to be good governance techniques and documenting it so that others may learn from and celebrate success. The cover story on Mabton, **p. 12**, is about one of those boards.

Another big event at conference was the unveiling of WSSDA OnBoard. OnBoard is the nation's first professional learning system for school directors. As you'll see on **page p. 6**, OnBoard was well received. For 2020, we look forward to sharing it with more people at workshops in all nine Educational Service Districts.

And finally, my favorite part of this issue is **p. 7**. As you all know, we do what we do for the state's youth, including the organization of an annual conference. Alexis, from the Olympia School District, shares with us the impact that conference had on her. Thank you, Alexis, for sharing your reflection, and everyone else, get ready to be blown away!

Tim Garchow

Tim Garchow, WSSDA Executive Director



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Add your voice!

Use *Direct* to share your learning with peers.

DIRECTOR TO DIRECTOR

We're looking to spotlight WSSDA members who'd like to share their insights as veteran board members, newcomers, or as exemplars of small, medium or large districts. If that's you, let us know!

PASSION PIECES

Is there a subject you feel strongly about which you'd like to raise with fellow school directors? Then submit a "passion piece" in which you share why the issue is important to you, what you've learned about it that others may not know and explain how this issue has informed your work as a school director.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

If your district has experienced success (or failure) that would be instructive to others, let us know so we can help you tell the story!

REVIEWED BY PEERS

Is there a book, a training or professional development event, software, or even an app that has benefited you? Write a review about it.

For submissions, questions or comments, contact Sean Duke, communications officer, at s.duke@wssda.org.

To advertise in *Direct*, contact Josh Collette, at j.collette@wssda.org.

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Designer Abigail Twombly

Technology Support Specialist Cassandra Heide

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Leadership Development

– Tricia Lubach

“Time went by too fast. That happens when engaged.” That was one of the many gratifying comments from WSSDA members about this year’s **Annual Conference**. At this time of year, when many of us focus on gratitude for the people who enrich our lives, connecting with nearly **1,200 education leaders** from across the state solely to improve the lives of our students is awe-inspiring. One attendee told us it was “one of the most effective learning experiences for me in a long time,” while many extolled the benefits of learning from peers by commenting, “LOVE, LOVE hearing from boards.” We also heard appreciation for the **three keynote speakers**, all from Washington state. About Erin Jones, one shared that “this woman left me feeling inspired and ready to do the hard work.” Another applauded John Norlin saying, “this man is doing his part to make the world a better place!” I believe that is what every one of us is trying to do. And I’m grateful we are in it together.



A slide from John Norlin’s keynote presentation, “Culture of Connecting: Creating a District No One Wants to Leave.”



Voting cards and other materials used by school directors at Delegate Assembly.

Government Relations

– Marissa Rathbone

As we approach the end of the year, we reflect on the accomplishments of 2019 with gratitude. A few of the most significant advancements of our branch this year include: Successful completion of a **105-day Legislative Session** with progress made in the areas of mental health and social emotional learning, graduation pathways, special education and rural schools funding; Increased attention to the **Trust Lands Advisory Committee** and the **Common School Trust** as an opportunity to generate revenue for schools statewide; Completion of a well-organized and energetic Legislative Assembly, where members voted on new or revised positions and ranked their priorities for the **2020 Legislative Session**.

We are hopeful that these efforts have allowed us to better serve and support school board members throughout the state. We look forward to continuing and strengthening this work in 2020. Please let us know how we can support you. Wishing you the best for a productive and positive new year!

Policy and Legal

– Abigail Westbrook

The **December 2019** edition of *Policy & Legal News* is coming soon. It features the unveiling of a NEW model policy establishing a **school-based threat assessment** program. All school districts must have a school-based threat assessment program in place by the beginning of the **2020-2021 school year**, so please don’t miss this edition. Thank you to everyone who attended the 2019 Law Conference! We had top notch, highly experienced public school law attorneys presenting. You all brought amazing energy and made the day vibrant. It is always great for me to connect names with faces and talk in person.



Sonja Trainor, Managing Director of Legal Advocacy for NSBA, presenting at this year’s Law Conference.



The newest addition to WSSDA's board of directors is Sandra Linde of Sunnyside School District.

A new face from Sunnyside

From Sunnyside School District, please join us in welcoming the newest member of WSSDA's board of directors, Sandra Linde. Linde has served on her local board for eight years and seen six children graduate from the district over a span of 29 years. When asked why she became a board director, she mentioned that she came to board meetings so often that the superintendent eventually suggested she run for the position. "I was one of those people that always went to board meetings, so they called me 'Sandra Public.' Now that I'm on the board, people call me 'Sandra Board Meeting.'" Speaking to her at the close of November's annual conference, we asked Sandra what her years of service have shown her. "The understanding that the school district only works if they work as a team, like our conference theme, connecting. If we help each other understand all the stories of the students, staff, and the community, then we can connect and work as a team." Linde will carry that idea forward as she steps up to state-level leadership for the WSSDA Board of Directors starting in January.

WSSDA 2.0 gets real

BREAKING GROUND

At the 2019 WSSDA Annual Conference, Executive Director Tim Garchow offered a list of ways in which WSSDA has reached version 2.0. On October 16, 2019, that figure of speech became literal; WSSDA broke ground on a new headquarters building.

Since 2011, multiple WSSDA boards have commissioned studies and analyzed the pros and cons of either relocating, remodeling, or rebuilding. In the last analysis, rebuilding was the chosen option.

"There was just so much that needed to be done to the building to bring it up to code, to bring it to be a safe workplace for staff so they could better collaborate," said Marnie Maraldo, WSSDA past president. "Not only that, it will be a great space for bringing in other groups to work together and really increase the voice of our members."

With the success of WSSDA's subscription-based services plus careful financial management, no dues-based revenue is being used to fund the construction. The new building will reduce maintenance costs, eliminate the need for repairs, increase energy efficiency, and provide redesigned work and meeting spaces that will be healthier and enhance productivity.

Construction is scheduled to finish in late 2020. In the meantime, staff continues to work in the original building, minus about one third. The front portion of the building was removed to clear space for the new building's footprint. Once complete, the new facility will be approximately 25% smaller but will include about 75% more meeting space. This will improve WSSDA's ability to serve as a hub for influencing the course of public education in Washington state.

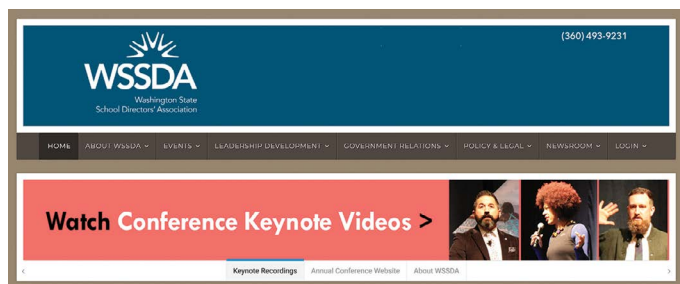
CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Breaking ground for WSSDA's new headquarters with (left to right) WSSDA staffers Josh Collette and Antonio Gonzalez, WSSDA Past President Marnie Maraldo and WSSDA President Brenda Rogers.

What's up with the WSSDA website? Alot!

If you've visited WSSDA's website lately, you've probably noticed a few changes. There is a new layout, which the staff is still polishing, and a whole new system making it all run. The five-year-old software running the site wasn't going to make it until the new year, so staff



adopted a modern platform that also provides a new and improved way to manage WSSDA's subscription services for model policies, *Policy & Legal News*, and *OnCall*. This new technology should make it easier for school directors to take advantage of WSSDA's online resources. And finally, the website is now hosted with one of the industry's top hosting services, giving the site greater security and reliability. Powered by WordPress, the world's most popular content management system, the website shares the same underpinnings as some of the most trafficked sites on the internet.

WSSDA committee election results

WSSDA Board of Directors

- DA 1** Lee Anne Riddle, Ferndale
- DA 2** Harlan Gallinger, Issaquah
- DA 8** Sandra Linde, Sunnyside
- DA 9** Debbie Long, Central Valley

Legislative Committee

- DA 1** Chris Nation, Marysville
- DA 2** Brian Giannini-Upton, Mercer Island
- DA 2** Sandy Hayes, Northshore
- DA 2** Luckisha Phillips, Federal Way
- DA 3** Marisa Peloquin, University Place
- DA 4** Jim Stoffer, Sequim
- DA 4** Rebecca Diehl, South Kitsap
- DA 5** Rebecca Stillings, Rainier
- DA 6** Mark Watrin, Battle Ground
- DA 7** Annette Eggers, Eastmont
- DA 8** Michelle Perry, Sunnyside
- DA 9** Dan Hansen, West Valley
- DA 10** Kelli Melhus, St. John
- DA 11** Jill Oldson, Richland

Resolutions Committee

- DA 1** Marc Rosson, Arlington
- DA 2** Christine Chew, Bellevue
- DA 3** Dave Olson, Peninsula
- DA 5** Melissa Beard, Tumwater
- DA 9** Adam Mortensen, West Valley
- DA 11** Jennifer Stevenson, Othello

Nominating Committee

- DA 2** Sima Sarrafan, Bellevue
- DA 4** Cindy Kelly, Port Angeles
- DA 6** Tracey Malone, Camas
- DA 8** Beth Schroder, Goldendale
- DA 10** Allison Munch-Rotolo, Pullman

Interscholastic Activities Committee

- DA 2** Tina McGann, Enumclaw
- DA 3** Lori Glover, Peninsula
- DA 4** Brandino Gibson, Sequim
- DA 6** Cory Chase, Washougal
- DA 8** Chad Christopherson, Naches Valley
- DA 10** Ron Cooper, Medical Lake

From the Board President



Every year I write a holiday letter to friends and family. Every year I read the old letters before recapping the current year. I always cry, which is no surprise to those who know me well. I cry because there, on one page per year, is my life, and the lives of those I love. Every year there is loss. Every year there is joy. This year will be the same. Our family experienced an unexpected and immeasurable loss this year, and yet, there are still so very many things to be grateful and hopeful for.

It is the same for our WSSDA family. We have pulled together and supported one another through some losses. Several staff moved to new challenges or embraced retirement. We miss them but are grateful for the foundations built and the competence and cheerfulness of our new colleagues.

We have many reasons for gratitude at WSSDA this year:

We adopted an encompassing Equity plan and continued to facilitate training, including the new OnBoard.

We participated in system-wide advocacy and brought our student-first agenda to every education table.

Our committees accomplished a mountain of consolidation and clarity around positions and combined the legislative and delegate assembly into one general assembly.

The membership changed the dues formula to afford small districts equitable dues while allowing WSSDA to continue expanding supports and services to all school districts.

We held robust Director Area meetings where new training modules were embraced as effective and targeted. Another class graduated from Leadership WSSDA to help WSSDA grow for years to come. A huge group attended board boot camp to begin their journey to effective governance.

We broke ground on our new building to provide a safe and accessible environment for staff and welcoming meeting spaces for constituents.

I hope the losses you contemplate will be outweighed by things that bring you joy and hope. The work that you do, each and every day, with generosity and goodwill, is a gift to our communities, our children and our future. You, each of you, bring me joy and promise. I will be thinking of you this holiday season.

Brenda Rogers

Brenda Rogers, WSSDA Board President



OnBoard gets rave reviews

At the 2019 Annual Conference, WSSDA OnBoard rolled out to a broad audience for the first time. During one of the conference's general sessions, WSSDA Executive Director Tim Garchow cited OnBoard as one of the reasons he is able to say that WSSDA has evolved to "version 2.0." OnBoard is the first professional learning system in the nation designed exclusively for school board members. Since the development of OnBoard began in 2017, it was a major milestone to offer it at the annual conference.

"OnBoard is a game-changer"

Two breakout sessions were offered, one on the foundations of local funding and one on the foundations of state funding. On a scale of 1-5, the average attendee rating fell just shy of the highest mark at 4.6. Half of all the written comments included the words excellent, great or best.

"I've attended other workshops on school finances and walked away without any retention of what I learned," said Bethel School Director Roseanna Camacho. "They were taught by tax lawyers or accountants who speak a different language from the varied walks

ONBOARD CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

EQUITY IN ACTION

Defining WORDS FROM DIVERSITY TO EQUITY

Within minutes of taking the stage as an Annual Conference keynote speaker, Erin Jones gives the audience an assignment. "I'm going to say some words and I want you to partner with someone at your table and tell each other what those words mean to you. It's alright if you don't know," she says, "say what you *think* they mean."

The words she puts on the screen are diversity, culturally responsive practice, and equity. Throughout the rest of her talk, she tells her own story to illustrate how and why equity is so important. "We've got to be talking about not just surviving," said Jones, "I want to thrive. I want to personally thrive. I want all of my staff to thrive, and I want every student to thrive."

To do that, Jones urges everyone to unpack their own story, understand the stories of students, and then critically examine the systems in place because "equity is at the nexus of those three things."

Watch the video of Erin Jones' speech, as well as those by John Norlin and Robert Hand, at wssda.org/2019keynotes.



Diversity: wanting to acknowledge and, possibly celebrate, the difference between people. Typically focused on compliance or the superficial ways people are different. **Culturally-responsive practice:** The ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as those from other cultures. **Equity:** providing people whatever they need to thrive; taking away barriers that might be hindering certain groups of people from access to success.

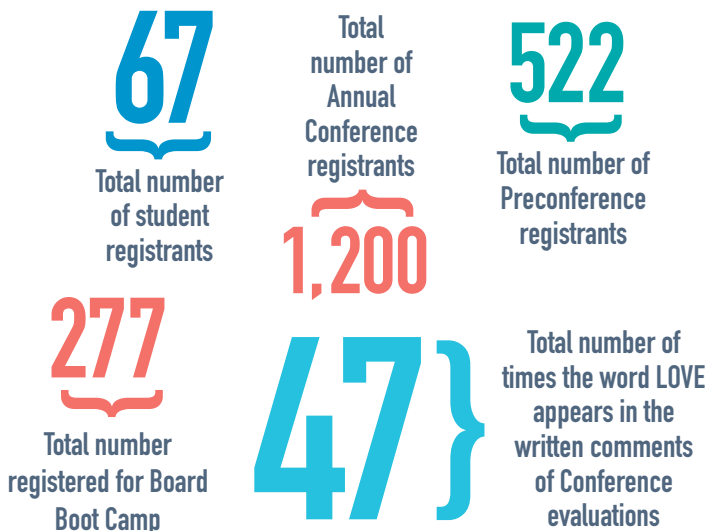


Architect rendering

Historical perspective:

1978 WSSDA building constructed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish and rebuild 1 or 2 story • Sell property and lease or buy a new location
1991 WSSDA purchased existing property and renovated	2016 Explored cohobitation with other educational organizations
2001 Studied options to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell and move • Rent and move 	2017 Made final mortgage payment on existing building Explored options for design build process
2004 New septic system installed	2018 WSSDA board approves moving forward with design-bid-build process
2005 Converted print shop into the current conference center with kitchen and restrooms	2019 WSSDA board names Christensen Inc. successful bidder for construction of new headquarters Ground is broken on October 16
2011-13 Studied options for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosmetic upgrades • Mechanical systems upgrades • Full modernization 	

AC by the numbers



Student Voice

ANNUAL CONFERENCE INSPIRES A WILD SENSE OF HOPE

I have never felt so recognized or valued as I did at the most recent WSSDA Annual Conference. As an alternative high school student, I have witnessed many students struggling with their current schooling system because they don't have connections and are constantly feeling invisible in the eyes of educators.

Sitting in a room full of teachers, board members and education enthusiasts, I couldn't help but wish that all of those students feeling unrecognized and overworked could just for a moment hear all the appreciation expressed for them. So often, we feel that teachers may not see the full picture of our lives, that we are trying to hold jobs, navigate homework load, be involved with family life, and navigating complex social connections.

Sitting in this room was the first time I heard someone recognize this fuller picture about the life of a student. To me, this was the best kind of counseling I could have ever hoped to experience. Just for a moment, you get to feel seen. Just for a moment, you get to be what inspires all of these educators to do what they do.

And it just gets better from there...

I have never been one to sit quietly and let the adults talk, especially when the topic is about student success. Usually, as a student at these types of things, you are seen as a token of "student input." But at WSSDA, it was like every student was a VIP.

In every discussion that I went to, the students' input was by far the most anticipated and appreciated. Speakers were eager to hear from the students, and at the end of each session, they were thrilled to meet each of us and learn about our districts.

Too often, students fail to see just how important they are as individuals. Experiencing this WSSDA conference left me with this wild sense of hope that someday, with the hard work of our wonderfully dedicated educators, we will see not only students who look good on paper but students who are inspired by and connected to the world around them.



ALEXIS NEVY is a senior at Avanti High School and is passionate about bringing new leadership models to the district with an emphasis on inclusion, equity and connection. Alexis serves on the Olympia School Board as a student representative.



Culture of Connecting

Snapshots from the 2019 Annual Conference







COMMITTEE CORNER

Periodically we will focus on one of WSSDA's committees—who the newest members are and what they do. Since the Legislative Session is right around the corner, we begin with the

Legislative Committee

KELLI MELHUS, ST. JOHN, DA 10

How will you use your voice to represent your director area on the Legislative Committee?

Director Area 10 is made up of some of the smallest school districts in the state and I want to make sure WSSDA priorities represent their interests. I just graduated from Leadership WSSDA and thought it would be a great way to get involved to make sure all voices are heard.



LUCKISHA PHILLIPS, FEDERAL WAY, DA 2

What led you to run for a seat on the Legislative Committee?

Similar to most, wanting to use this time of service to the best of my ability. I come to this committee with some passion and experience around equity, inclusion, and special education. The policy level is a wonderful opportunity to bring some of the South King county perspectives to the table. I am honored and grateful to be a part of this committee and the work we can do on behalf of the greater community.



JILL OLDSON, RICHLAND, DA 11

What led you to run for a seat on the Legislative Committee?

As a new school director I learned very quickly the impact our legislation has on every student in our state. It is critical that districts are informed and aware of how legislative issues will affect them. I plan to educate our area districts and make sure our voices are heard as a united voice for the best interest of every student.

Other newly-elected Legislative Committee members are **REBECCA DIEHL, SOUTH KITSAP, DA 4** AND **ANNETTE EGGERS, EASTMONT, DA 7**

ONBOARD, CONTINUED FROM PG.6

“This is the area I’m most concerned about grasping as a new board member and I’m feeling very relieved after taking both of these classes.”

of life that are on school boards. But the OnBoard workshop was equitable because no matter where you come from or what your background is, you could understand the information. It was taught by people who understand how to deliver information where you can pick it up, it’s effective, and it stays with you.”

One of the hallmarks of OnBoard is that it is interactive in nature. Lessons are designed taking into consideration contemporary theories on adult learning. OnBoard is not a sit, get, and forget scenario. “We’re learning so many valuable things in a way that will enable us to take what we learn back to our districts and apply it to our budgeting process,” said Lori Fast, chair of the Centralia School Board. “It’s been fantastic.”

“It was a liberating and empowering moment to know that I actually get it, and now I can actually do my job effectively, and efficiently, and be good at it.”

For 2020, several OnBoard-related initiatives will occur. First, the search for outside funding sources, like grants from philanthropic organizations, will accelerate. Second, staff will consult with the WSSDA board to develop a budget that will enable a significant increase in the work of developing more OnBoard curriculum. Third, the staff has set a goal of developing three additional content areas of OnBoard to add to the finance learning experiences already finished. Fourth, WSSDA’s leadership development consultants will come together to calibrate and prepare for the effective delivery of the OnBoard experience. And finally, multiple sessions of professional development, including the OnBoard sessions, will be offered at each of the nine Educational Service Districts throughout the year.

“I believe OnBoard is a game-changer for our members,” said Executive Director Garchow. “Feedback from directors has been extremely positive, so I’m excited to work with staff and the WSSDA board to find ways to accelerate its roll-out and development as much as possible.”

“Even though I’m in my second term on the board, I’ve learned things I didn’t know I didn’t know.”



How the census impacts K-12



Members of the U.S. Census team met with educators and administrators from across the state at WSSDA's annual conference in November. Their outreach was part of ongoing efforts to share how the 2020 Census count impacts the federal funds that communities receive each year. Those funds support programs and services that are critical for schools, students, and younger children.

The equitable distribution of billions of dollars hangs in the balance with programs like Title I, the National School Lunch Program, Head Start, and numerous grants to support special education and teacher preparation. Census data will also be used to determine allocations for over 100 federal programs that serve mostly low-income people.

And finally, an accurate census count is important for communities of color. Undercounting those communities would mean the public schools serving them would not receive adequate resources.

To aid school districts with promoting participation in the census, the U.S. Census Bureau has created a Statistics in Schools program that uses census statistics and resources to create classroom activities and materials for grades Pre-K–12. Visit census.gov/schools to learn more.

US Census Bureau partnership specialists Judy Dunne and Katy Kaltenbrun with Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal, center, at the WSSDA Annual Conference.

Where are we now?

ADVOCACY CYCLE



Play to Win January–March

- Subscribe to our legislative updates
- Track bills on WSSDA's Bill Watch List
 - Get to know WSSDA's priorities and positions
- Attend Legislative Conference & Day on the Hill
 - Plan trips to Olympia with student reps
- Communicate directly with your legislators (in person is best)
- Coordinate with us to provide testimony

YOU
ARE
HERE

BUDGETING & BARGAINING CYCLE



Planning

Clarity and Consistency

- Agree on your messenger and your message
- Be proactive, not reactive
- Have a social media plan
- Consider your audiences and how best to connect with them
- Expect challenging situations and plan for contingencies
- Develop talking points and practice so you are prepared
- Calibrate frequently

ONCALL: Your intranet

Make it 'Grand Central' for everyone

Is an intranet on your radar? It should be! Intranets can be an information hub for everyone, from principals and board members to support staff. It keeps everyone in the loop — and helps them become ambassadors with the public. Staff get secure log-in codes, time and money is saved by avoiding paper, and in some cases, staff meetings. The bottom line is that everyone gets the same accurate message as quickly as they want it.

Content must be relevant. This is an information and resource page. In addition to the essentials (HR policies, emergency plans, training resources, phone/email lists), you should base content on what your staff want. Use focus groups or surveys to define your content and check in regularly to stay on course.

Define the information they need (and want):

Possibilities include: Upcoming events and schedules • Training opportunities • School board updates • Links to departments, like HR for benefits and salaries • Links to school websites/social media pages • Forms to download • Links to off-site resources and “job alike” associations • Internal job postings • A “classified ad” section where staff can sell/donate items (but clear the idea with legal dept.) • “Kudos” section to honor and thank employees • A search box!

Regular updates and purging are critical. Stale content gives the impression you don't care; that you're unreliable. During a crisis, this is the best way to reach everyone instantly with the same message to prevent misinformation, provided you also use social media and emails, driving staff to “the source” of what's really going on.

Invite tough questions. The most popular section of my hospital's intranet where I work in internal communications is called “Rumor Has It.” Anyone can ask almost anything — and we answer! Transparency builds trust — and trust can stop rumors or “fake news” in its tracks.

Ownership and schedules are critical. Identify content owners and create an accountability structure (e.g. check-in meetings, which can be virtual).

Be flexible. If something isn't getting many clicks or seems useless, don't keep it just because someone thought it was a good idea. “That's the way we've always done things” doesn't fly here.

The biggest benefit of a lively, engaging intranet is that everyone will feel part of a team focused on the same vision.

Contributed by Shannon Priem, APR, former communications director for Oregon School Boards Association; internal communications specialist for Salem Health

This is an excerpt from **On Call**, a WSSDA subscription publication for school district communications.

Mabton's Journey



An inside look at what's carrying them forward

The 2018-19 school year was a year of new beginnings for Mabton School District. The board hired a brand new superintendent as well as a group of new administrators to lead the work in the district's two schools; an elementary school and a junior/senior high school.

Mabton, Washington is a predominantly Hispanic community of 2,500 located 43 miles southeast of Yakima. About 850 of those residents make up the student body of Mabton School District. About a third of the students come from migrant families. In a district of this size, even the board members tend to recognize most of the students and know them by name.

2019 was also the first time the Mabton board applied to WSSDA's Board of Distinction program. "Applying as a board," said Chair Wendy Morrow, "I wanted to show the community that their board of directors were doing what they were elected to do, that we really were focusing on our kids and making our schools great."

Exceeding their expectations, Mabton received Board of Distinction recognition and was further recognized as a Board of the Year in the small school district category.

"I really didn't expect us to get Board of Distinction this year," said Morrow. "I thought, well, we're first-time applicants. Let's just see what the process is about. But as we went through the process, we realized it was a really good reflection on what we had done the year before and how intentional we were, and we didn't really realize that first year that we were being that intentional. So to sit there and do the reflection was really kind of cool. And then when you get the data and you see evidence of student achievement, however small it may be, that was confirmation that we're moving in the right direction and we're taking the right steps for our kids."

As described in their application, the first step the board took was to determine what was important to Mabton to ensure all of their students were successful. That process yielded a model, which they refer to as the three-legged stool. Each leg of the stool represents an important part of making Mabton students and staff successful. The legs represent Relational Trust, Systems



“I really didn’t expect us to get Board of Distinction this year,” I thought, well, we’re first-time applicants. Let’s just see what the process is about.”

to Support People, and Academic Press (which refers to rigor). “The idea,” said Morrow, “is that all of our initiatives and data collecting needed to be linked to one of these three legs of the stool. If we could do that, our students would become more successful.”

And link they have! Every decision the board and administrative team makes falls within those three categories or legs of the stool. Even further, Mabton’s colors are gold and purple. Each leg of the stool is assigned a color (gold, purple, and grey). Then, every communication or request sent out by the district is color-coded to show its connection to either relational trust, systems of support, or academic press. This gives the community visual reinforcement of the district’s strategy to promote student achievement.

There is also visual reinforcement for teachers. Another practice the district has is a peer-to-peer system of recognition for doing good work in relation to one of the three legs. There are three letter M’s; each has the color of one of the legs on the stool. Whenever somebody is seen as doing a good job in one of those three areas (relational trust, systems of support, or academic press), that person is given the appropriate letter M to sign and carry for a week. Whoever is carrying the purple M that week selects the next recipient for the following week, and so on for the grey M and gold M.

After developing the image of a stool, colors, and recognition practices to support Mabton’s threefold strategy for student achievement, the district didn’t

CONTINUED on page 14

“...when you get the data and you see evidence of student achievement, however small it may be, that was confirmation that we’re moving in the right direction and we’re taking the right steps for our kids.”



Side Note: The Mabton School District has been engaged with CharacterStrong, whose co-founder, John Norlin, gave the first keynote speech at the 2019 WSSDA Annual Conference. WSSDA was unaware of this connection until interviewing Director Morrow at the conference.

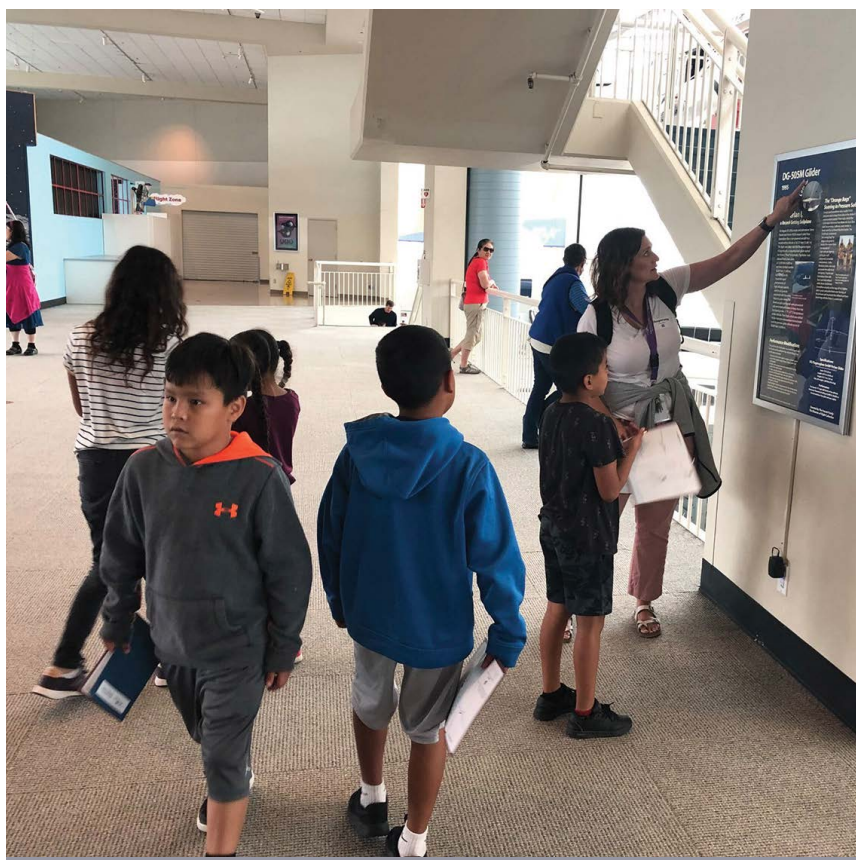
“Some of the decisions and actions that the board took to support this work was ensuring our staff had sufficient training. We sent about half of our staff to PLC training at the beginning of the school year and most of the remaining staff during summer of 2019.”



MABTON, CONTINUED FROM PG.13

stop there. As stated in their Board of Distinction application, “some of the decisions and actions that the board took to support this work was ensuring our staff had sufficient training. We sent about half of our staff to PLC training at the beginning of the school year and most of the remaining staff during summer of 2019. This allowed our staff to use their PLC time in a more effective manner to identify what kids will learn, how we will tell if they have learned, what we will do if they do not learn, and what we will do if they do learn.”

Another step the Mabton school board has taken is to weave itself into the fabric of district activities in order to build trust and inform decision-making at the policy level. One way they’re doing this is by visiting classrooms. Each board member performs walkthroughs of the school buildings every month “making sure that when we implement new curriculum or when we implement things like dual language or PBIS, that we see evidence of those things in the classroom and that our teachers are getting used to seeing us as board members inside the classroom and observing,” said Morrow. “It’s not ‘oh, a board member is in my classroom and I’m in trouble.’ It’s ‘let me show you the great things my kids are doing in the classroom.’ And





“It’s not ‘oh, a board member is in my classroom and I’m in trouble.’ It’s ‘let me show you the great things my kids are doing in the classroom.’ And so we’re really building that trust all the way from the top to the bottom.”

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The board is also joining the staff at conferences and workshops. For example, over the past year, board members accompanied district staff to CTE and bilingual education conferences. This allowed them to see and better understand the work staff is doing and to keep an eye out for possible policy implications.

“I went with a bunch of our administrators to a CTE conference a couple of weeks ago,” said Morrow. “It was great to see them in action and what they’re working on. But there was also the realization that there’s policy that’s going to come before the board in the next year, all surrounding pathways to graduation and CTE frameworks. So we’ve really been trying to get board members to go to some of these trainings that our administrators

are going to so that we can see the work that they’re doing and figure out how, as a board, we can support what’s going on in the buildings.”

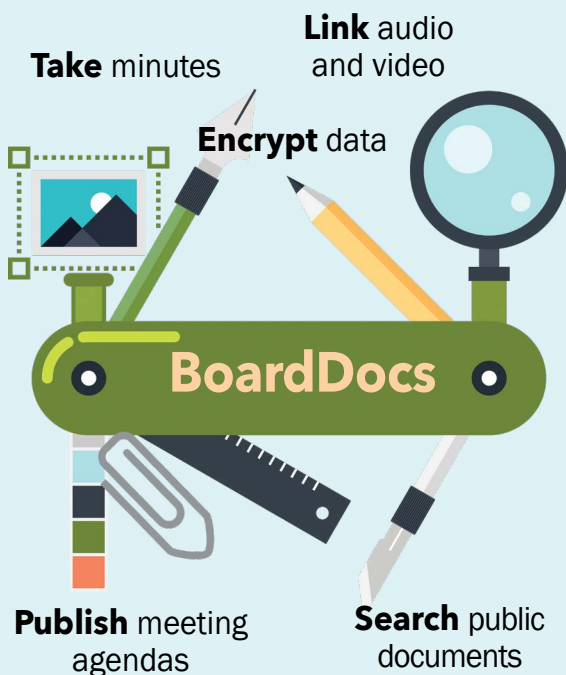
Assessments of what is going on in the buildings are ongoing. Over the past year, small improvements were observed in Smarter Balanced Assessment scores, but overall the picture is not so rosy. Director Morrow shared that she expects their district’s report card displayed by the Washington School Improvement Framework to be one of the least flattering in the state. “We’re not looking at that as an obstacle though. We’re looking at it as an opportunity to say ‘OK. Give us support to provide more resources for our kids.’ It’s an opportunity for us, not a penalty. Yeah, we’re there, but we’re not going to be there very long. We’re already turning things around before they even make this announcement.”



MABTON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Left to right: Dr. Joey Castilleja, superintendent; Lilly Villa student representative; Carrie Herrera, vice chair; Raymond Morrow, student representative; Wendy Morrow, chair; Anabel De La Torre, director. Not pictured, James Adams, director; Tammy Rhems, director

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GUEST ESSAY

One Board's Experience with a Confidential Superintendent Search

Submitted by the Central Kitsap School Board

Hiring a superintendent is the most important decision a school board can make. When our school board (Central Kitsap Schools) faced this task, our number one goal was to recruit a superior pool of candidates. We started by choosing a search firm that we felt was in the best position to help us achieve that goal.

Our search firm presented and explained options for nationwide searches, including a conventional public interview process. We ultimately decided on a confidential search—a new and different approach for us. It was a chance worth taking.

Why consider a confidential search?

Our consultant, Hank Harris, conducts searches from a human resources perspective. As he describes, a confidential search will, in almost all cases, allow for a higher quality pool.

“Talented individuals know their own worth and are often not interested in participating in a public process where they may not emerge as the chosen one,” he said. “If your superintendent applied for a job in another district, would that impact your view of their commitment? Good leaders don’t want to risk returning home to their community with a badge of disloyalty on their lapel.”

Even given this reality, each board needs to consider what process will work best in their community. Hank helped us determine whether a confidential search was right for us by outlining the key requirements:

1. Trust from our staff, families and community, and a commitment to maintaining this trust by clearly communicating before, during and after the process.

2. Shared courage among board members to explain the rationale for not using a public selection process.

Is a confidential search legal?

Yes. Our state does not require a public interview and superintendent selection process. However, it does require decisions throughout the process to be made in public. One of our first steps was to seek training from our legal counsel, with an emphasis on the Open Public Meetings Act. We also consulted with counsel throughout the process to ensure that we were meeting all legal requirements.

How did we communicate this new process?

We took a “no surprises” approach to communication. Our district’s director of communications, David Beil, created a broad-based and effective communications plan. “We began by clarifying the process right from the start with staff, families, and our community,” he shared. “Then we reinforced those expectations throughout the process.” These efforts included a comprehensive webpage, emails, and social media to advertise the timeline and opportunities for public input. We also added a Superintendent Search Process agenda item to every board meeting for required decisions or updates on the process.

Was there push back?


A few community and staff members pushed back, primarily those who had experienced public superintendent searches. As a board, we recognized that not everyone would agree, so we were prepared for those questions. Once we explained our rationale, most of those individuals did understand and support our decision.

Did we find our next great superintendent?

Yes! Dr. Erin Prince has not only exceeded our expectations, but those of our staff, students, families, and community. You know you’ve made the right choice when you repeatedly hear, “The board did a great job. Well done!”

Dr. Prince is already laying a foundation to take our schools to the next level. She believes this work is made easier because our search process helped her begin building relationships with staff, families and our community immediately. “Our community has a lot of trust in this school board,” explained Dr. Prince. “The way they handled this search process helped them continue to build trust. This gives me, as an incoming superintendent, legitimacy as a leader. It means I can focus on what’s most important, without distractions, right from the outset.”

Is your school board facing a superintendent search? You may want to consider a confidential process. This growing trend—if it’s right for your community—could help you find your next great superintendent. Good luck!



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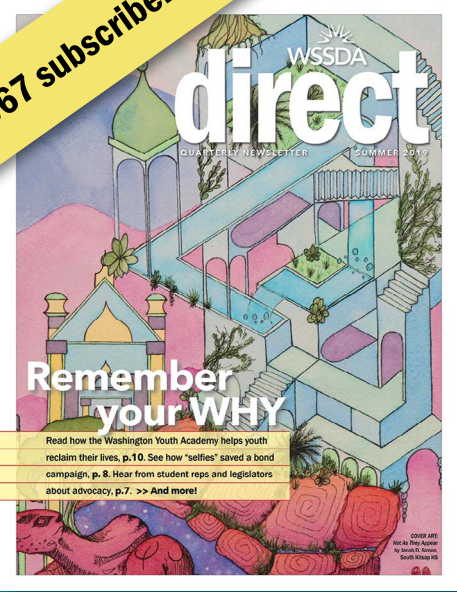
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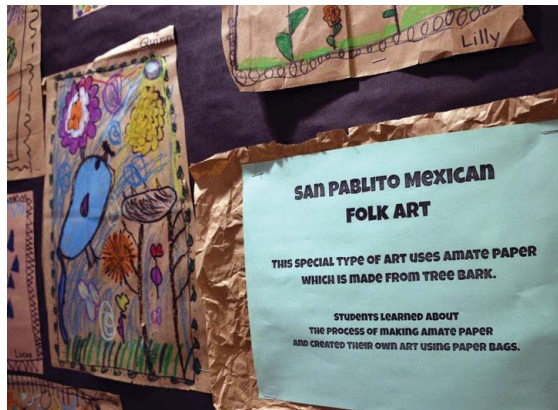
Olympia School District unveils a pilot elementary art program with a focus on collaboration



Lindsey Johnstone's art class at Hansen Elementary School has been hard at work creating a collaborative art piece she has titled, "Feather Mural." All students, from kindergarten to fifth grade, will contribute a feather to this mural to create two large wings that will become wall art for the school.

Johnstone's art class is part of the Elementary Art Pilot Program, a program currently in its first year at the Olympia School District. There are three teachers in district who are teaching art at their schools: Lindsey Johnstone at Hansen Elementary, Julia Bloom at LP Brown Elementary and Mike White at Garfield Elementary. "Our board members had an interest in expanding art programs in our elementary schools," says Executive Director of K-12 Teaching and Learning Lauri Klancke. With this piloting program, each student at the three schools receives an art class once a week.

Johnstone enjoys the freedom of this program to come up with the projects she wants to implement in the classrooms. Her focus is on collaboration. "The projects express the individuality of the student as well as the school as a whole," Johnstone says. Her first project of the year focused on painting dots, inspired by Peter Reynolds



book "The Dot." Her second project was a large mural that currently fills up a large wall space in her classroom. The focus of the project was learning about the role of symmetry in art. "The program is currently focusing on the elements of art, such as line, texture and form," says Assistant Director of K-12 Teaching and Learning, Anne Gallagher.

"Mike White has had his students working with clay. He's also been building this foundation with the students around color and understanding the mixing of colors," Gallagher says. "He's started out with guided watercolor in low light settings; a castle scene with moonlight, or a cabin with a sunrise. He's been guiding them through these pieces. Then, students will be able to take what they've learned and create their own watercolor piece. Mike is very intentional about building the skills and the students' understanding of art concepts."

CONTINUED on page 19

“There are students who have tough things going on in their lives. We have found that students who have had a hard time in the regular classrooms come to art and they are focused and very engaged. Art has become this expression of themselves. It’s been really amazing.”

—Anne Gallagher, Assistant Director of K-12 Teaching and Learning

For Indigenous Peoples Day, White’s class spent the week diving into the history and culture of the native people. One of the stories White told the class was the tale of Salmon Boy. White says: “The students were enthralled by the Native flute drifting through this timeless story. Our students then learned to use Salish design elements to decorate their salmon pictures.” One student said of this project: “It was fun to honor their special stories and create designs of their culture.”

In Bloom’s classroom, students are learning about the color wheel and art from different cultures around the world. Currently, the class is learning about Japanese art. “They’re going to create a self-portrait and use a vocabulary word to describe themselves, such as ‘smart.’ And they’ll learn how to write the symbol in Japanese,” says Bloom.

As with many creative pursuits, the direction of the class changed as Bloom learned more about her class. Bloom started with a Día de Muertos theme this October. She saw how excited the kids were learning about Mexico; especially the students with Mexican family members. “I thought it would be so fun to honor different cultures of the kids. This program exposes all students to art and they are learning about other cultures, outside of their own,” says Bloom.

Gallagher says: “There are students who have tough things going on in their lives. We have found that students who have had a hard time in the regular classrooms come to art and they are focused and very engaged. Art has become this expression of themselves. It’s been really amazing.”



This story and many more can be found at ourkidswa.com. Let districts statewide see your good news by sending it to ourkids@wssda.org.

“I thought it would be so fun to honor different cultures of the kids. This program exposes all students to art and they are learning about other cultures, outside of their own.”

—Julia Bloom, art teacher at LP Brown Elementary and Mike White at Garfield Elementary

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QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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