



WSSDA

# direct

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019



## Wellpinit hits Hollywood

How a little effort went a long way for Wellpinit School District, *p.12.*

Serving on the board inspired a student board rep to give back, *p.16.*

On levies, limits and bonds, *p.10.* Take the member survey, *p.4.*

Teasers for Annual Conference... **And more! >>**

Terry Patton, Wellpinit  
Technology Director (left)  
with actor Tokala Clifford



### From the Executive Director

**E**arlier this fall, we had a successful Legislative Assembly. (See the pictures on p. 8.) From that emerged WSSDA's priorities heading into the 2020 legislative session. A concise, one-page summary of the priorities will be ready for our members at Annual Conference.

Then, there are the fall regional meetings where myself and other staff visit all 11 Director Areas. It's been exciting to give directors their first taste of WSSDA OnBoard, a professional learning system for school directors. Feedback has been extremely positive and we are building it out as fast as we can.

Another topic at regional meetings has been the WSSDA member survey (see p. 4). I strongly encourage all school directors to take the survey in order to help us set priorities and gauge the needs of schools directors. As a staff of 15 serving over 1400, it's critical that we be very strategic in how we invest time and resources to best serve school directors. Your feedback will help staff and the WSSDA Board make informed decisions.

Finally, make sure to read about Wellpinit on page 12. I learned about that story by visiting their district during our ongoing "small schools tour." The main purpose of the tour is to build relationships and gain direct insight into the issues and opportunities confronting K-12 public education across the state. Another great benefit of the tour is uncovering stories about the lengths that teachers, principals, school boards and all community members go to in order to support their students, as happened in Wellpinit.

Thank you for reading and see you at Annual Conference!

*Tim Garchow*

**Tim Garchow**, WSSDA Executive Director



**Photo shown above:** WSSDA staff take a moment to memorialize their trip to Spokane for Legislative Assembly.



### 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, A) share why the issue is important to you, B) describe what you've learned about it that others may not know and, C) 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? Did it help your school district, or even just one school? Then spread the word by writing a review about it. Your story will give peers a chance to take notice.

**For submissions, questions or comments,** contact Sean Duke, communications officer, at [s.duke@wssda.org](mailto:s.duke@wssda.org).

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Washington State School Directors' Association

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## Leadership Development

– Tricia Lubach

T.S. Elliot wrote, “in my end is my beginning.” And so it is with the end of summer and the **start of another school year**. While students may have been enjoying a relaxed summer pace, not so for school directors. **Summer is prime time** for board retreats, self-assessment, and goal setting, activities that get squeezed out during the busy school year. Our branch has been supporting these invaluable growth opportunities and the pace of our work is only increasing. With Autumn comes **regional meetings** and November’s **Annual Conference**. At those events, we’re rolling out the first learning experiences of **WSSDA OnBoard**, a professional learning system for school directors. Also, we continue to work with Educational Service Districts to provide training opportunities statewide. By offering high quality, **interactive professional learning** at locations closer to you, we hope to support you in your vital role as a leader for kids.



Grand Coulee Superintendent Paul Turner with WSSDA staff at the first fall regional meeting.



Marissa Rathbone kicking off the 2019 WSSDA Legislative Assembly held in September.

## Government Relations

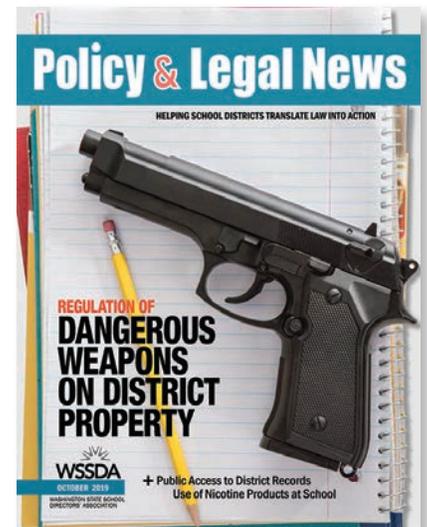
– Marissa Rathbone

Since joining WSSDA in July, I have been traveling throughout the state with the aim of building upon **strong working relationships** with legislators, organizational partners, and school board members. All those meetings, along with preparing for **Legislative Assembly**, have provided me with a deeper understanding of how to best support and serve the priorities of school board members and to do so in partnership with our state decision-makers. Even when challenges exist and perspectives differ from one community to another, it is clear that the **best interests of our students** are the collective priority of the elected officials with whom I’ve conversed. **The goal of the GR team** here at WSSDA is to represent you fairly, honestly and with integrity guided by the legislative positions and priorities as established by our members at Legislative Assembly. This is fulfilling and rewarding work and I am honored to serve you. Please do not hesitate to reach out to share your ideas, questions and perspectives—anytime.

## Policy and Legal

– Abigail Westbrook

**The fall edition** of *Policy & Legal News* is right around the corner. This edition features an article explaining how school boards can tighten control of dangerous weapons on district property. Also arriving before you know it is **the 2019 Law Conference**. Please come join us! It is a **full-day pre-conference event** the day before Annual Conference with new content each year. Law Conference allows you to hear from public school law attorneys experienced in tackling the pressing legal issues facing school boards. We always finish Law Conference with a reception because, well ... it’s rough out there. Finally, we’re also preparing for **Delegate Assembly** and I hope to see you there. This is your opportunity to vote on proposed permanent positions and revisions to WSSDA Bylaws. **Please keep an eye out for all these proposals on our website by October 25!**



## Taking the pulse of equity and needs of school directors



If you haven't already, all school directors are encouraged to take the WSSDA member survey. The survey was emailed to all directors with an address on file with WSSDA. **Feedback from school directors is critical** for the WSSDA board and staff to make informed decisions about the services and supports provided to WSSDA members. (Every school director is automatically a member of WSSDA.)

A special focus of the survey is educational equity. A pair of questions asks about the state of training and policy adoption in school districts. Through everyone's responses, the WSSDA board hopes to establish baseline knowledge of what school directors are doing to ensure each and every student in their district is getting what they need to be successful. That information can inform decisions around future events, workshops, newsletter stories and more. **Another survey question** asks directors to rank topics according to how urgently they need to learn more about them. Responses to that question may influence what kind of workshops to offer and what curriculum to develop next for WSSDA OnBoard. To honor your time, this year's survey is about **25 percent shorter and mostly multiple choice**. Tell the WSSDA board and staff what you need by submitting the survey as soon as possible.

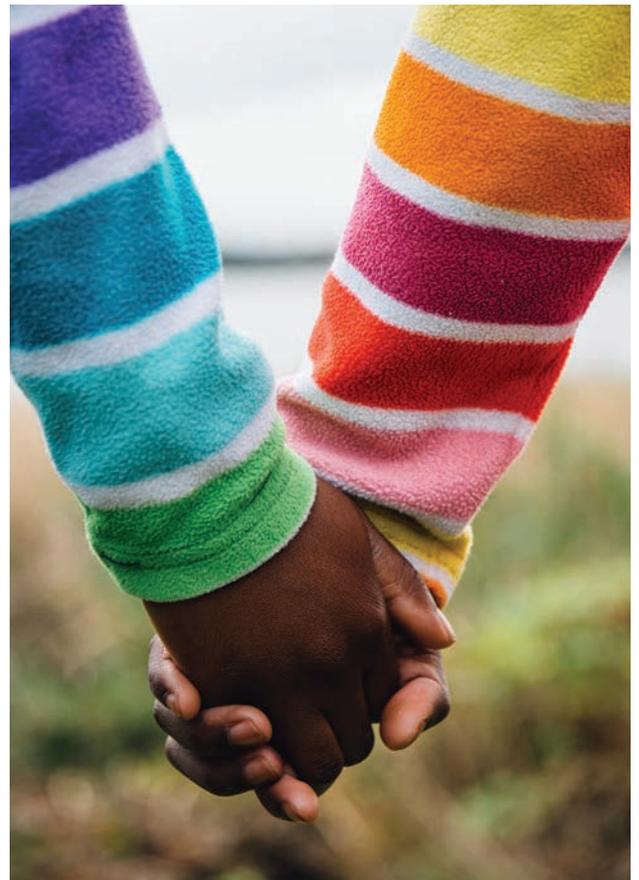
## Focusing on the fundamentals of Annual Conference

Anyone who's attended one of the preconference sessions at WSSDA's Annual Conference knows that the learning starts well before the opening general session. These extended workshops are designed to provide an opportunity for in-depth learning about specific topics with expert speakers and experienced school directors sharing their knowledge.

New this year is the **Budgeting and Bargaining workshop**. Understanding your district's budget and the role of the board in shaping it is vital to successfully fulfilling your role as a steward of public funds. Using the new WSSDA OnBoard curriculum, attendees will emerge with a better understanding of the nuances of budgeting and its connection to collective bargaining.

As the topic shifts into bargaining, specialists will share best practices around planning, communications, public meetings and decision-making during the collective bargaining period. A panel of districts with recent negotiation experiences will share their insights and recommendations. Attendees will also receive a copy of WSSDA's *Budgeting & Bargaining Manual* outlining the year-round cycle.

**Law Conference** returns for another year of providing top-notch information from some of the best legal minds in the state. Start your morning with a light breakfast, then settle in for a day focused on what school directors and superintendents need to know to keep pace with the



CONTINUED on page 5

ever-changing laws governing public education. After Law Conference wraps up, relax with fellow attendees at the reception that follows.

**Board Boot Camp** is a perennial favorite—and for good reason—especially in an election year such as this one. There is no better place to get an understanding of the scope and importance of the role of a school director. Learning and networking with fellow new board members is another benefit. Superintendents and veteran school directors often accompany their new directors to boot camp. Attending with veterans helps new directors connect their workshop experience with the specifics that relate to their particular school district.

**Open Government training** is held after the three pre-conference workshops to allow you to get this important, state-mandated training. There is no charge for this workshop. It is required within the first 90 days of becoming a director and must be retaken every four years. Taught by the Washington Attorney General’s office, it is an easy and efficient way to fulfill the requirement.

*For those of you attending the conference, here is a schedule of the preconference sessions:*

**PRECONFERENCE  
Thursday, November 21**

**7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**  
CONFERENCE REGISTRATION  
*Grand Foyer, 2nd Floor Olympic Tower*

**8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m.**  
LAW CONFERENCE  
*Regency A-D, 2nd Floor Cascade Tower*

**11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**  
BOARD BOOT CAMP  
*Grand E/F, 2nd Floor Olympic Tower*

BUDGETING & BARGAINING  
*Evergreen A, 1st Floor Olympic Tower*

**4:15 – 5:15 p.m.**  
LAW CONFERENCE RECEPTION  
*Regency A-D, 2nd Floor Cascade Tower*

**4:15 – 6:00 p.m.**  
OPEN GOVERNMENT TRAINING  
*Grand E/F, 2nd Floor Olympic Tower*

**From the Board President**



**A**s my year as your WSSDA president ends, I would like to leave you with a thought centering around the theme of public education advocacy. I believe that public education is the best method of providing education to our 1.1 million students in the state of Washington. Public education opens doors to many of our marginalized students and provides challenges to those who are not. I often tell the story of myself and my siblings and how public education provided the opportunities for us to achieve the dreams that our parents had for us. It was public school teachers who saw our potential and provided challenges and much-needed encouragement.

So, how do we perform the best advocacy possible? Mark Whitaker, 2016 Utah Secondary Principal of the Year, provides some tips. First, understand the reason you are advocating. Second, consider lawmakers as regular folks like you and me who need your feedback on bills. Third, develop relationships with legislators. Developing relationships will grow coalitions that will lead to a better understanding of each other and more effective advocacy. Fourth, most lawmakers have a real interest in public education and are looking for and are open to solutions and different views. Fifth, your voice is powerful. Although an individual voice is impactful, the voice of a collective group is even more impactful. Sixth, get and stay informed. Do your research. Understand the issues and the implications of the decisions that are made. Seventh, advocate for necessary and realistic legislation. In other words, make sure that the legislation is pertinent to the issues facing public education. Focus your energy to make the utmost impact on achievement and that which may gain the support that is needed to be effective. Eighth, make your pitch and ask for exactly what you’re seeking. Clearly say what you need, why it is important, and what effect it will have on student learning. Ninth, thank our legislators. We often forget to thank them for the work they do. Remember, even though they chose this line of work, sometimes it can be thankless. Notes of appreciation are always welcomed. Last, offer your help. Be a resource. Invite them to your schools so they can be part of the school day or student activities so they can see what benefits the programs they fund provide our students.

In closing, public education advocacy is key to expressing our needs, and as WSSDA’s director of government relations says, “the best time for legislative advocacy is always right now.” We can make a difference in our students’ lives by keeping them in our minds as we advocate for them. Public education is the equalizer and provides opportunities that students may not otherwise have.

**Aurora Flores**, WSSDA Board President

# There's no better time than the present



Get  
Warmed Up  
**OCTOBER – DECEMBER**

- Get to know** your local legislators, their goals, and their staff
- Invite** them to your schools and events
- Share** your district & WSSDA legislative priorities
- Provide input** on issues and bill drafts
- Align messages/priorities** regionally and locally
- Register** for Legislative Conference and Day on the Hill

**The best time for legislative advocacy is right now.**

Year-round advocacy efforts by every board member are essential for propelling WSSDA's legislative priorities through the state Legislature. Each year, we have the opportunity to build upon the achievements and lessons learned from the last session. One takeaway from the 2019 session was that we need to communicate our priorities earlier and more often with state officials.

Fortunately, our 2020 priorities will be ready to be shared from our website ([wssda.org/priorities](https://wssda.org/priorities)) during the WSSDA Annual Conference. Print out the priorities, take them with you, and put them in

the hands of your Legislators and any organizational partners you encounter statewide—sooner rather than later. That simple action is a small but valuable opportunity to engage and make a difference.

**From October through December**, we encourage you to communicate directly (emails are good, phone calls are better, and face-to-face meetings are best) with your state Legislators. Get their contact information at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/MemberEmail>. Invite them to tour your school or attend events, and then use that opportunity to share your district and WSSDA priorities. If you need a little help with talking points or any aspect at all of advocating for legislation, please don't hesitate to call or email the Government Relations team. We're here to help you understand the process, build lasting relationships, and make a difference!

NORTHWEST TAP:

## Tackling issues of race and social justice through tap dancing

**S**earch the web for Northwest Tap Connection (NTC) and you'll see the group has been a subject for major Washington news outlets, cultural organizations, and video producers such as the [greatbigstory.com](https://www.greatbigstory.com) and Sundance Ignite fellows.

Recipients of the 2009 City of Seattle Mayor's Arts Award, this exceptional youth group has performed in The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Contemporary Arts in Chicago, and at halftime for the Seattle Storm. School directors are in for a treat when Northwest Tap Connection performs at the 2019 Annual Conference!

As stated on their website, NTC's mission is "inclusive of providing quality dance and job opportunities to underserved communities, and also to raise a generation of socially conscious artists who produce works that foster change."



# 4

## Former School Directors, now Legislators

Why they sought an even higher office and how one experience informs the other.



**Representative Christine Kilduff**  
28th Legislative District



**Representative Paul Harris**  
17th Legislative District



**Representative Jacquelin Maycumber**  
7th Legislative District



**Senator Sam Hunt** 22th Legislative District

### What made you decide to run for the state Legislature? Were you on a school board at the time? How did your role on the school board impact your decision?

I wanted to make changes to policy and wanted to get involved in the legislative process statewide. I wasn't successful at first – but eventually, with persistence, I was elected. Once elected, I experienced lots of “firsts.” This was my first time to Olympia, my first time to the Capitol, and my first time being involved in government. I quickly learned that I only represent one vote.  
–Rep. Paul Harris

I was encouraged to run for the state Legislature via a connection that I'd made while on the school board. Running for the Legislature was something I had never considered until a community member suggested it, similar to how I ended up on the school board.  
–Rep. Christine Kilduff

Most of my education, and DIS, work centered on legislative or congressional actions. I had a strong interest in being inside the chamber doors making policy rather than being outside hoping that what I did had an impact. And I am what might be called a “political junkie” and wanted to be at the center of the action. I had been managing Representative Cathy Wolfe's campaigns, and when she said she was running for county commissioner, she asked me to run for her house seat. And I did. I had served on a city council and school board, and a run for the Legislature seemed like a logical step. I won a contested primary and have been reelected since.  
–Senator Sam Hunt

While I was on the school board, I was also a parent. This was an added benefit at the time because it felt like “instant service.” Having lived this perspective while on the school board, it has made me more effective as a legislator.  
–Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

### As legislators, you already appreciate the power of lawmaking, but what advice would you give others about influencing or participating in the process?

Get to know your legislators, meet with them, visit your local schools, and attend school events. Do not wait until the Legislature is in session to contact your legislators; days are filled with 15-minute meetings, committee meetings and floor sessions. Session is

the least effective time to try to squeeze in time. Visiting legislators during session is important, but it is much more effective if your legislator knows you and knows about your district.  
–Senator Sam Hunt

Don't be shy school directors! Get involved with your local legislators, and with WSSDA on legislative issues. We want to hear from you!  
–Rep. Christine Kilduff

It is important to invite legislators into schools and communities. Each school district, and even further, each school, has something unique to share. Your success stories matter!  
–Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

Come to Olympia if you can, weigh in, and get involved with your local legislators. It is important to meet with them and discuss issues that you're concerned about. They will listen.  
–Rep. Paul Harris

### What is one example of something you learned while on the school board that helps you navigate the complexity of the Legislature?

Serving simultaneously on the North Thurston School Board and as a legislator was a good education. I learned that what we think we do with the legislative budget to support or fix schools is not always the whole picture. For instance, when the Legislature provided salary increases for teachers, it was not for all teachers, just those funded by the state. So school districts ended up providing salary increases for the levy-funded teachers. Thus a state increase became a cut in some parts of districts' budgets.  
–Senator Sam Hunt

While on the school board, I learned to make decisions through a broad lens. In my legislative role, I always consider, “how does this decision impact local districts and students?”  
–Rep. Christine Kilduff

I learned that policies affect people on the micro-level. Every policy change, tweak, etc. has a ripple effect, and that helps me remember that governance affects others.  
–Rep. Jacquelin Maycumber

The school board was the first board that I had served on. It helped me to learn how to collaborate and work with others on issues.  
–Rep. Paul Harris



# Your voice in action

Snapshots from WSSDA Legislative Assembly

**T**he Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) held its annual Legislative Assembly in September. New, old, and amended legislative positions were put up for review, discussion, and vote by school directors. Participants also ranked the positions in order of priority.





# Levies, Limits and Bonds, Oh my!

by Brian Sims

**F**or school directors, the road to asking voters to raise local taxes and authorize debt is fraught with legal and political hazards. Also, state law and the state constitution impose certain requirements and limits. Here is a description of each of the ways local communities can support school districts with their property taxes.

**ENHANCEMENT LEVIES**, which require a simple majority, have been on a tumultuous path in recent years. The old “operations and maintenance levy” is now called the “enhancement levy” and must only be used for enhancements beyond state-funded basic education. The new limits adopted in the 2019 legislative session are the lesser of \$2.50 per \$1,000 assessed property value in the district or \$2,500 per student. For districts with more than 30,000 students, the per-student limit is \$3,000. The per-student limit will be adjusted for inflation starting in 2020.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must approve the district’s enhancement levy expenditure plan prior to submitting to the voters. Funds must be deposited in a separate subfund and expenditures must be tracked separately. Future enhancement levies must be reduced if the State Auditor finds expenditures in a prior year did not comply with RCW 28A.150.276. An enhancement levy can be authorized for up to four years.

**CAPITAL PROJECTS LEVIES**, which require a simple a majority, are for major renovations or replacement of school facilities, purchase and installation of major equipment; and energy audit and energy capital improvements. Major equipment repair and maintenance must not

supplant building maintenance and repair expenditures from the general fund. The maximum duration of capital levies is six years.

**TECHNOLOGY LEVIES**, which require a simple a majority, are a kind of capitol projects levy for technology systems and facilities and the necessary training and software. The maximum duration of technology levies is six years.

**TRANSPORTATION LEVIES**, which require a simple majority, are for acquisition and major repair of student transportation vehicles. The maximum duration of transportation levies is four years.

**BONDS**, which require a supermajority, are for designing and constructing new schools, performing major renovations of existing schools, and acquiring land for building schools. A bond measure asks voters to do two things: authorize debt and levy taxes necessary to pay off that debt. Total debt must not exceed 2 ½% of assessed value of taxable property. Bond measures require 60% approval and voter turnout of at least 40% of the last general election.

Districts may explain these ballot measures to voters, but must not use district resources to advocate for them. Look forward to more on the topic of bonds and levies in future issues of *Direct*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For 18 years Brian worked for the Senate Ways and Means Committee as budget coordinator for the committee. He has a BA in communications from WSU, an MS in the study of creative thinking from the State University College at Buffalo, and an MPA from the University of Washington.



### Enhancement

50%  
4 YEARS

- Enhancements beyond state-funded basic education



Capital Projects  
50%  
6 YEARS

- Major renovations
- School replacement
- Major equipment
- Energy audit
- Energy capital improvements

### Technology

50%  
6 YEARS

- Technology systems
- Facilities
- Training
- Software



Transportation  
50%  
2 YEARS

- Student transportation vehicles-
- Acquisition
- Major repair

### Bonds

- 60%
- New schools
  - Major school renovations
  - Acquiring land for building schools



# WHY EVERYONE SHOULD RESPOND TO THE 2020 CENSUS

New teaching materials !

The U.S. Census Bureau's Statistics in Schools (SIS) program provides free activities and resources for teachers to help bring statistics to life in the classroom and prepare students for a data-driven world.

This upcoming school year, SIS activities will be more topical than ever. They will teach students and their parents why everyone should respond to the 2020 Census and how it will help shape the future of their communities for the next ten years.

SIS is launching a series of new teaching materials about the 2020 Census which will include classroom activities, updated class-

room maps with census statistics, videos for students in grades K-12, activity books for children ages two to five and ELL and adult ESL activities. With these materials, teachers can incorporate Census Bureau statistics into subjects such as English language arts, math and social studies. The materials are free and developed by educators and subject experts from across the country.

The new materials underscore the importance of everyone who will be counted in the 2020 Census. They also make clear how responses are used to make decisions that benefit students, families and schools. Each activity includes a section that students can do at home, which is one way children can talk to their parents or guardians about how important it is to respond to the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census is a count of everyone who lives in the United States and its territories and starts in mid-March. The 2020 Census questionnaire asks a few simple questions such as the age, sex, and the number of people living in your home.

People should count all children who live in their homes, including newborns and others too young for school. That's important because responses to the census help schools plan for the resources they will need when the new generation of children is ready for school. You can respond online, by phone or by mail. Individual responses are confidential and cannot be used against you by any court or government agency.

Some of the federal funding based on census statistics is for services that influence students' readiness for learning, including maternal and child health programs, and housing, heating and food assistance. When it comes to schools, the 2020 Census will determine funding for special education, teacher training, technology, school lunch assistance, Head Start and after-school programs.

With the new SIS activities, your schools can spotlight the 2020 Census and the importance of making sure children are counted.

*Provided by U.S. Census Bureau*



## ONCALL: Share your good news with your community

The way a community feels about its school district is based largely on how the district communicates. If school districts don't have a purposeful way to communicate its achievements and positive impacts, the public may never hear about it.

Each year the Phi Delta Kappan magazine conducts a poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools. The 2018 poll shows a stark contrast between how people view their local school versus schools in general. Seventy percent of the parents polled gave their own child's school an A or B grade. But only 43 percent of the general public gave their local schools A's or B's. The nation's schools as a whole received lower ratings still, with only 19 percent giving them A's or B's.

This disparity is always concerning but especially when districts try to build public support for a bond or other money measure. Voters aren't likely to dig into their pocketbooks for schools that they don't feel are effective or doing a good job managing money.

Good, consistent communication is a key piece of building trust, confidence and strong relationships. That means communicating well and often.

**Tell your stories.** Remind teachers and staff to post photos and short narratives on their school webpage and social media sites about the good things happening — whether it's a guest speaker or students at work. Don't expect local media coverage for this good news; share it on school media channels in addition to sharing with local media directly.

**Engage senior citizens.** Seniors are a growing population, and in many districts, they are the largest voting block. Keep them informed about schools, so they have the information they need to be supportive, not only with their vote but also their time. Invite them to volunteer as tutors, to eat lunch with students once a week or help supervise the playground.

**Educate your lawmakers.** Help elected representatives recognize the good things your schools are doing and the challenges they face. If they do, they'll make informed decisions. Meet with your representatives regularly; send them copies of your newsletter; invite them to events or to tour your schools.

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



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## Meeting stars and making films: Wellpinit student videos premier in Hollywood

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## STUDENT QUOTES

**“This experience had a good lasting impact on me. Now, I want to edit movies professionally when I grow up.”**

**“I learned that storytelling is more important than you would think, and that the process is long, but necessary for telling a good story.”**

**“Cooperation with others is key, because if you don’t cooperate when you’re working as a group, what you produce won’t turn out well.”**



**A**n ancient Chinese proverb states, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” Wellpinit to Hollywood is about 1200 miles, but that journey began with one phone call.

About two years ago, the music program in the Wellpinit School District had little equipment and even less space for teaching and learning. Then, in March of 2017, K-12 Music Teacher Shawn Brehm called the VH 1 Save the Music Foundation.

Brehm explained to the foundation that when he took over the music program the previous year, there were only 12 playable instruments and there hadn’t been a choir class or instrumental music program in a very long time.

Through intense conversations with Save the Music, the Wellpinit School District was able to secure two grants: approximately \$35,000 in the 2018-19 school year to kickstart the middle school and high school program, and approximately \$35,000 in the 2019-20 school year to kickstart the elementary program.

Brehm and colleagues did not stop there. In addition to VH 1, Wellpinit also secured grants from the Hagan Foundation and Washington state’s Music Matters program co-administered by the Washington Association of Music Educators and Music Aid Northwest. All together, grant funds totaled more than \$129,000.

CONTINUED on page 14



**Wellpinit student filmmakers, above, at the premier of their film at Hollywood’s Grauman Chinese Theater, now named TCL Chinese Theater, pictured at top of page.**

WELLPINIT continued from page 13

**“They asked me something like ‘would you like to have a new storytelling lab with resources for video production?’ I kind of felt like we had won the lottery.” –Terry Patton**



The Hagan Foundation, located near Spokane, WA, donated \$50,000 over two years starting in 2017. The Music Matters grant, funded by the sale of special license plates, provided \$4,250. Music Matters was signed into law by then-Governor Christine Gregoire in 2011.

“The impact of all these grant funds is just phenomenal,” said Brehm. “My main takeaway from this experience is that you never know what can be accomplished if you don’t try. If we can provide our students the opportunities they deserve by making a phone call, then try!”

And that’s only part one of this adventure.

“I got an email out of the blue,” said Terry Patton, technology director for Wellpinit School District. “They asked me something like ‘Would you like to have a new storytelling lab with resources for video production? And would you like to participate in a Paramount Network documentary about Wellpinit students learning film production, host a Native American movie star and

have your students’ work premier at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood?’ I kind of felt like we had won the lottery.”

In fact, the email wasn’t totally out of the blue. If you’re up to date on media conglomerates, then you know that VH1 is owned by Viacom, which also owns the Paramount Network. The network is a distinct entity, but in the same “family” as Paramount Pictures, maker of big-budget movies. Apparently, people at VH1 told some folks at the network about their connection to the Wellpinit School District.

One thing led to another, and then the Paramount Network set out to make a documentary about Wellpinit students making documentaries. The attention, alone, was surprising, but the connection with the network yielded significant material and social impact.

Wellpinit School District received valuable new equipment, (computers; lights; green screens; cameras; sound recording equipment; video editing software), purchased by



Paramount Network, and students received instruction from a professional filmmaker through another foundation called Barcid. As stated on their website, The Barcid Foundation is a nonprofit media arts organization founded to foster understanding of the culture, traditions and issues of contemporary Native Americans. Established in 2004, the foundation offers educational opportunities to Native American communities through multimedia programs.

As for the movie star, the network made it possible for Gil Birmingham to spend a day in Wellpinit meeting with students, and sharing meals and speaking with the community. Birmingham played roles in the Twilight film series, Wind River, Hell or High Water and currently holds a self-described “dream role” in a Paramount Network show called Yellowstone.

“Meeting him was pretty awesome,” said student Jozaiya Joseph-Moses. “It meant a lot that he took time out of his day...to come here and spend time with us and talk to us about storytelling and film making. Me and my grandma have always thought he was an amazing actor...I was thinking, ‘What is



he going to think of our films?’ but he didn’t have anything negative to say, and I really appreciated that. He was giving us tips too.”

One student film is about teaching and learning the Salish language; others explore other serious topics including wildfires, drug abuse and suicide awareness. While the students were working on their videos, the community and district staff were working on fundraising. The school board, staff and the Spokane Tribe all donated time and resources to helping the students raise funds for traveling to Hollywood for the premier of their films in the Chinese Theater.

“The kids worked hard to pay for the trip and absorbed as much as they could from this experience,” said Wellpinit Board Chair Terry Payne. “It had a big impact and the students did a great job sharing their experiences with us at our board meeting.”



### Thanks to...

Hagan Foundation  
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### Wellpinit now has...

142 wind instruments  
 82 percussion instruments  
 20 guitars  
 7 pianos  
 1 Video Production  
 Storytelling Lab



**“The impact of all these grant funds is just phenomenal,” said Brehm. “My main takeaway from this experience is that you never know what can be accomplished if you don’t try.”** –Music Teacher Shawn Brehm

## A NIGHT WITH THE STARS

The Hollywood premier of the television show *Yellowstone*



Above: Wellpinit Technology Director Terry Patton and actor Anna Kendrick

Below: *left to right*, Laina Phillips, Wellpinit Middle School and High School Principal; actor Kevin Costner; Kim Ewing, Wellpinit Elementary School Principal; actor Danny Houston



Special thanks to Shawn Brehm, music teacher and Terry Patton, technology director for Wellpinit School District

# Giving back

**How serving on the board fostered a student's desire to benefit his community**

*by Cedric Nagata*

**T**he unfortunate reality for many school districts is that there's disconnect between the school board and the student body. Some have realized having a student representative is an effective remedy. As the student representative on the Riverview School Board, I represent over 3,300 students from grades K-12.

My student rep journey began in 2017 after learning about the opportunity from a previous student representative. Based on my active involvement in extracurriculars and sports, she saw me as an emerging leader with potential.

After learning of the program, I quickly grabbed an application along with two other incredible candidates. I interviewed with three school board members, the current junior student rep, and the superintendent. Completing the application process was nerve-racking, but I knew the importance of what I was attempting. After receiving my acceptance phone call, I was beyond excited. This was a chance to embrace my leadership qualities and benefit my community, an opportunity I was determined to make the most of.

My first year began right away. I had much to learn, but the supportive environment provided by the board members made the process simple. Suddenly, I had a behind-the-scenes look at how the district I had called home for the last two years functioned. Listening to presentations at board meetings and networking with hundreds of incredible staff in the school district took my previously narrow perspective on the education system and expanded it. Having seen school only as an insider, I knew I'd be witnessing a new perspective. The experience I gained in one year was more than I expected.

Instantly, I was involved in the decision-making processes for a variety of district policies. I witnessed how the board searches for ways to improve the environment for students, then immediately brainstorms ideas and solutions to incorporate. Before I began my term, the district had issued laptops for every student. In a transition of this magnitude, there are bound to be complications. Foreseeing this, the board asked me to include regular surveys of my fellow students in my report at board meetings. The board wanted first-hand feedback concerning the effectiveness of the laptop program. This formula worked tremendously. As the students progressively

**“Suddenly, I had a behind-the-scenes look at how the district I had called home for the last two years functioned.”**



**“Instantly, I was involved in the decision-making processes for a variety of district policies. I witnessed how the board searches for ways to improve the environment for students...”**

became accustomed to their new devices, the school board was always informed, allowing them to hear the voices of the students throughout the transition.

The benefits of the bond and laptop program have been tremendous in my school district, providing hundreds with an improved educational experience. But my participation did not stop there. Student voice is vital to improving any academic institution. That's why I made it a goal to share my perspective with others so they could see the same successes I did.

In 2018, I spoke at the WSSDA Legislative Conference offering my perspective to hundreds of school directors and superintendents. This eye-opening experience was the first true moment where I was able to speak my mind in front of an influential crowd. My audience consisted of those who have a real impact on the type of educational institution I have been involved in for the past 11 years. It was incredible to see these higher-ups truly listen to what I had to say. After my presentation, I was approached to appear on “The Money Jar” podcast by Junior Achievement, where I continued sharing my student voice.

For my second term, my goal is to leave an everlasting impact on my school district and community as I transition into college. I've had the honor of sharing my perspective on certain aspects of education, and I am determined to better my school district so that the grades below me have a positive learning experience.



## STUDENT VOICE

STUDENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS IN THEIR OWN LEARNING

Students bring a different perspective to discussions. They are highly invested in many decisions that directly impact their learning or activities. Including students at the front end of the decision-making process can positively affect the success of a district's programs and policies.

Those that do include student voice find student contributions to be enlightening and valuable. Gretchen Brion-Meisels, a faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, says that when schools find ways to partner with students "as stakeholders in their own learning," they end up creating programs and policies that are more effective at meeting the schools' own goals for supporting young people.

Listening to students "doesn't mean unilaterally considering their perspective," Brion-Meisels says. "It means recognizing that young people have a perspective on the world that adults can't share, and that their perspective should be welcomed alongside the wisdom that adult perspectives bring."

Brion-Meisels offers five ways schools can integrate student voices:

- Regularly solicit student feedback
- Engage students in studying and assessing their schools
- Include authentic student representation on leadership teams
- Invite students to discussions related to their own learning
- Consider young people as stakeholders and partners in their schools

While some districts have students on the school board, another effective tool at the high school level is creating a principal's advisory council, comprised of a cross-section of students representing each grade level and other interests, such as athletics, music, vocational classes.

Advisory councils usually meet once a month to discuss topics ranging from the type of food offered on the lunch menu to school improvement and curriculum concerns. The most effective councils find ways to attract not only the outgoing, higher-achieving students but also those who typically don't get involved or who may even feel disengaged from school.

Whatever the avenue, the key is to provide opportunities for meaningful student involvement, says Adam Fletcher, who founded SoundOut, a nonprofit organization that works with schools to increase student voice. "Students have all this voice already," he says. "It's a matter of whether adults want to hear it."

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

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— Marti Kline, Iowa Association of School Boards

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# Learning from the mountain

CASEE students contribute to ongoing Mount St. Helens research



It's been nearly four decades since Mount St. Helens violently erupted on May 18, 1980, sending a massive plume of ash 80,000 feet into the atmosphere. The ensuing landslide transformed the landscape, reducing hundreds of square miles around the mountain to a wasteland. Today, thanks to a partnership with the Mount St. Helens Institute, the eruption continues to transform learning opportunities for high school students in Battle Ground Public Schools' STEM program.

Each year, 10th-grade Environmental Science students from Battle Ground's Center for Agriculture, Science and Environmental Education (CASEE) program venture up to the volcano for an overnight field trip of in-depth data collection. It's not just an academic exercise — scientists use the data in an ongoing research study to monitor how various plant species are recovering from the blast.

"This project is as real as it gets for a science student," said Andrea Parker, science specialist and teacher on special assignment (TOSA) for Battle Ground Public Schools. "You can present information in a classroom or look up images online, but until they're out in the field with their rain gear on, tools in hand, and hiking to the site of the actual eruption, it just doesn't mean the same thing for teaching students what it's like to be a scientist."

High school students in the CASEE program spend half of their school day on the program's campus, where they study a science-based curriculum immersed in biology, wildlife, forestry, natural resources, and other topics depending on their grade level, together with English, and then attend their home high school for the other half of the day. The CASEE program started in 1993 as a cooperative between the horticulture and science programs at the district's high schools and supports STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)

education across the district by bringing Battle Ground school children to CASEE for educational field trips.

"It's very different doing hands-on work compared to being in the classroom," said Andrew Tawwater, a sophomore who attends CASEE and Battle Ground High School. "Working directly with the plants and soils we're studying while filling our worksheets with data is a more effective way to grasp the concepts we've been learning about in the classroom. I signed up for CASEE because it seemed like a fun, focused program with more individualized attention, and it hasn't disappointed."

On Mount St. Helens, rain gear certainly was a key piece of equipment for the students, as the skies opened up and it rained steadily throughout the second day of the two-day trip. The wet weather didn't dampen the spirits of the 26 students who made the trip, though.

"For me, one of the highlights was watching the kids take this project so seriously," Parker said. "Even though they were getting drenched, the students never complained and saw their projects through to the very end, making sure they accurately collected all the data they needed."

It wasn't all grey skies and soggy clothes, though. The tenth graders spent the first day of their trip exploring the mountain under mostly sunny skies. On day one, the students and their chaperones hiked to Spirit Lake and explored the Ape Cave and Lava Canyon, mixing in geology lessons and a writing activity along the way. The group camped overnight and performed their data collection fieldwork on the second day of the trip before returning to CASEE.

CONTINUED on page 19

Back in the CASEE classrooms, students analyze differences in how the environment has recovered from the eruption across disturbance zones and land management strategies. Armed with their trove of data, the students will develop and finalize a research question based on their findings, and the project culminates with the students creating presentations.

“The MSHI STEM Ecology program has been a great opportunity for students to learn and apply disturbance ecology and scientific methods firsthand,” said CASEE instructor Irene Catlin. “It promotes high-level thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork, and is highly



**“Our mission is to inspire transformative learning experiences around Mount St. Helens. We bring these high school students out here so they can use the same practices and analyze data in the same way scientists do”.** –Gina Roberti, Science Education Coordinator for the Mount St. Helens Institute.

engaging. Students become immersed in their surroundings through direct observation and data collection. Rich experiences like this are extremely memorable, and it helps students truly connect what they learn to the real world.”

The Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) is a nonprofit organization that provides educational programming to enrich visitors’ appreciation and understanding of the Pacific Northwest’s youngest and most active volcano.

“Our mission is to inspire transformative learning experiences around Mount St. Helens,” said Gina Roberti, Science Education Coordinator for the Mount St. Helens Institute. “We bring these high school students out here so they can use the same practices and analyze data in the same way scientists do. The students get to see how the same practices and protocols for measuring different species, abundances, and soil sample collections can vary across many different subsets as they explore different sites.”



This story and many more can be found at [ourkidswa.com](http://ourkidswa.com). Let districts statewide see your good news by sending it to [ourkids@wssda.org](mailto:ourkids@wssda.org).

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## IN THIS ISSUE



Photos from the 2019 Legislative Assembly, pg.8

<b>WSSDA news and updates</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Former School Directors, now Legislators</b>	
How one experience informs the other	<b>7</b>
<b>Levies, Limits and Bonds, Oh my!</b>	
Ways local communities can support school districts with their property taxes	<b>10</b>
<b>Meeting stars and making films</b>	
Wellpinit student videos premier in Hollywood	<b>12</b>
<b>Giving back:</b> How serving on the board fostered a student's desire to benefit his community	<b>11</b>
<b>Our Kids:</b> CASEE students contribute to ongoing Mount St. Helens research	<b>18</b>