

# THE ARC OF ADVOCACY

## Relationship-building is the Key to a Successful Legislative Session

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### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Engaging Communities

### What a session!

Even really experienced lobbyists called the pace of the 2019 session frenetic, fast, and furious. Many different issues received attention and there were hundreds of successful bills. Our advocacy efforts increased and I want to thank so many of you who contributed. In big and small ways, we shared our voices. Here are some ways we continued building relationships to help successfully advocate for principals and the principalship during this legislative session.

### RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



Wellman

Two significant relationships we have within the political community are with Sen. Lisa Wellman (D-Mercer Island), Chair of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee and Rep. Laurie Dolan (D-Olympia), Vice Chair of the House Education Committee. Last



Dolan

summer, we engaged with both of these legislators as they toured the state and listened to various groups discuss their needs around school

safety, special education, mental health, and other issues. In the fall, we presented Sen. Wellman with our 2018 Torch of Leadership Award and she visited with our Advocacy Committee to share her vision and hear from our members. Mid-session, she visited again with the AWSP Executive Board to give them an update and answer their questions.

Rep. Dolan speaks for both of them when she says, “I always appreciate when principals come to the Education Committee and testify on bills. The voices of principals who do the daily work with kids are invaluable. Legislation is so much better when the principals who need to implement the law are part of crafting the policy and the process.”

### THE LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Last fall, AWSP’s Advocacy Committee began their work in earnest when they finalized AWSP’s legislative platform. This platform is important because it is shared widely with other education stakeholders and legislators. It lets other groups see our common interests as well as our unique needs. Committee members and other principals across the state also signed up last fall to become a “Principal Partner” to a legislator. Regular communication with policymakers help them better understand the role of a school leader so that they make better decisions throughout the legislative session.

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### ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEMBER CALLS

Beginning in January and continuing until the very end of April, advocacy committee members called in weekly to discuss the bills that were being heard in various committees. These conversations were critical to shaping our testimony on a variety of issues. Most of the testimony happened in the first two months of session as hundreds of education bills were brought to committees.

### OUR ‘DAY ON THE HILL’

January was also the month for our “Day on the Hill” and this year we showed up in bright AWSP scarves. About 40 principals traveled to Olympia to meet with their various legislators. We received very positive feedback about the conversations that they had, either with legislators or with their legislative assistants. Assistant Principal Ashley Landes from Skyline High School in Issaquah said, “It was a great opportunity to discuss our needs as K-12 principals with the authors of policy. It



empowered me as a professional and added fuel to my policy passion!” Principal interns groups also visited Olympia throughout session and their voices added to ours.

### VOICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Each week during session, I highlighted someone as our “Voice of the Principal.” These individuals came to the Capitol to testify on a specific bill or to meet with legislators. These instances of advocacy are important because they serve to highlight the role of principals within the context of a specific issue.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY COMMITTEE VISIT IN OLYMPIA

In March, AWSP’s Diversity and Equity Committee spent a day in Olympia. Part of their day included a visit to the Capitol to meet with Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos (D-Seattle), Chair of the House Education Committee and a member of the Equal Opportunity Gap Accountability and Oversight Committee (EOGOAC). Because this visit was later in the session, the committee had about 30 minutes to share their work with Rep. Santos and to discuss connections to education policy and work for the future.

### WASHINGTON, D.C. MEETING

In March, we took our advocacy efforts to Washington, D.C. where

10 principals met with staff for all 10 House members and for both of our senators. Our national advocacy event centered around funding for Title II, Title IV, higher education, infrastructure, and school safety. We also networked with principals from across the country.

### MEMBERS REACHING OUT

Throughout session, many of you engaged with your legislators using email or social media. You probably even talked with them at local community events or by phone. Each contact is important and adds to their understanding about how the decisions they make impact the work that happens in schools across our state. Thank you for taking time to reach out!

### QUOTES FROM LEGISLATORS

Finally, I will leave you with a few statements from legislators who responded when I asked them to send some words of encouragement to you. Since I get to visit with many of them regularly, I want you to know how much you are respected by these men and women. Many legislators tell me that they know how critical the role of principals and assistant principals is to our school system and that they really do appreciate hearing from you. Thank you again for all that you do each day and please let me know what issues we need to tackle next year.



Lekanoff

*“Educating our kids is our paramount duty, and we cannot do it without leadership of our educational community. Our principals provide the foundation for all of our kids. Today, I stand behind them in supporting all the great work they do for our communities every single day.”*

**Rep. Debra Lekanoff** (D-San Juan County)



Schoesler

*“The principals in my legislative district do a tremendous job running their schools. They play an important role in their community. Some principals in my district even perform double duty by also serving as a teacher or as the school district superintendent. I appreciate staying in touch with our school principals and learning more about the issues impacting them and their schools, either when I see them in our communities, or when they come over to Olympia to meet with legislators. Keep up the great work!”*

**Sen. Mark Schoesler** (R-Ritzville)



Hunt

*“As the son of a middle school principal, former teacher, and school board member, I admire the time and dedication – and patience – it takes to be an effective principal. The principal is the leader and trend setter for his/her school. When we find an excellent school, we find an outstanding principal leading the way!”*

**Sen. Sam Hunt** (D-Olympia) ■