

MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD



Recapping AWSP's 2019 'Day on the Hill'

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In a chilly and bright Monday morning in January, over 40 principals from across the state attended our 2019

"Day on the Hill." We also welcomed 10 administrative interns from PLU to our event and their experiences and participation were a fabulous addition.

This annual event in Olympia coincides with our winter board meetings when our AWSP Executive Board and our three component boards meet the last weekend of January in the SeaTac area. On Sunday evening of this weekend, the Executive Board and members of the AWSP Advocacy Committee head to Olympia to prepare for their legislative visit.

PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Engaging Communities

AWSP's Executive Board and members of the AWSP Advocacy Committee met on "The Hill" in January.

HEAD FOR THE HILL

We started early on Monday with a breakfast meeting and reviewed and passed out multiple copies of the AWSP Legislative Platform and the Local Funding Work Group document which we share later with policymakers. The Local Funding Work Group develops common talking points each year related to education funding and consists of WASA, WSSDA, WASBO, AEA, WSPA, and AWSP. After some policy and logistics review, we donned our brightly colored AWSP scarves and headed to The Hill.

Our headquarters for the day was the Washington Room in the Pritchard Building. Principals came and went as they had time between

appointments with their legislators. We also welcomed Gary Kipp's PLU interns here and were able to share some strategy and talking points with them. Some of the interns had already set up appointments with legislators and I encouraged them to also go visit legislators even if they didn't have appointments and emphasized that meeting with legislative assistants was extremely valuable as well. Several principals and interns also attended the House Education Committee hearing that afternoon and one intern even testified on a bill!

TIME WELL SPENT

The feedback we received throughout the day and afterwards was very positive. Principals who attended

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felt like they had meaningful conversations with many legislators involving topics ranging from funding for special education, the School Employees Benefit Board, and simple majority for school bonds to school safety, the need for mental health supports and the disparity of compensation in the administrative salary structure compared to teachers.

What is most meaningful to me, however, is that principals and interns who attended felt like their voices were heard and that they took an important step in establishing relationships with legislators. Many reported that the legislative assistants and/or legislators that they met with plan to reach out to them throughout the session with questions or when they need more information from principals. This is critical in my mind because as fast-paced as each day and week of the legislative session seem to be, each moment of conversation with legislators builds upon other moments and our collective voices are being heard in Olympia.

A huge thanks to those who traveled to Olympia to spend time meeting with legislators. Anyone can be an advocate and if you are interested in getting involved in advocacy efforts for AWSP, contact me! ■



AWSP Board and AWSP Advocacy Committee members make the principal voice heard in Olympia.



Board and committee members meet with Rep. Mike Volz.

“This was my first time participating in AWSP’s Day on the Hill, I’m always in awe of our Capitol and the process that takes place there. Keeping my ‘awe’ in check, I was able to visit with a half dozen legislators from central Washington. I have to admit, I had heard that some of my legislators were not approachable and even ‘standoffish’ when it came to meeting with educators.

I was surprised at the welcome I received in most of their offices. I was greeted warmly, thoughtfully listened to, asked deep questions about our issues, and felt genuinely heard. At this point in my career, advocating for AWSP has opened my eyes to professional advocacy and empowered me to share my experience with decision makers.”

Todd Hilmes, AWMLP Vice President, Principal, Naches Valley Middle

“Visiting one-on-one with seven of our elected representatives in Olympia in February confirmed for me their commitment to equitable public school education. They know they need to do something this session about funding special education, and are very aware that school administrators and other non-instructional staff did not receive the intended share of the salary funding provided last year. Initially I

was intimidated to meet with a legislator, but over time I have discovered we share a common commitment to serve, to lead, and to address emerging needs with limited resources. Almost always these conversations lead to more focused communication as legislators seek input later in the session.”

David Jones, ESPAW Past President, Retired

“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!”

Ashley Landes, Assistant Principal, Skyline High School, Issaquah SD

“I came away from this day realizing that my voice does matter and by contacting legislators it is not impossible to think that I can make a difference, legislatively, for my students.”

Kim Marinelli, PLU Admin Intern

“I began the day with no idea how AWSP’s ‘Day on the Hill’ would transpire. However, it turned into the day where I became a voice for my students and teachers, in a very public forum. Here is the kicker though – I would absolutely do it again.”

Katie Kehoe, PLU Admin Intern