More than 9 to 5

The Heart Behind School Communications

WSPRA Annual Conference & Awards Agenda

October 22–23, 2026

Enzian Inn • Leavenworth, Washington

Wednesday, October 21

4 p.m.
Enzian Inn Room Check-In *(Parking passes available after 1 p.m.)*

4–5 p.m. Level 2 – Enzian Inn
Conference Registration
Pick up your conference agenda, sponsor passport (complete it for a chance to win prizes), conference lanyard and name badge from the WSPRA Board of Directors.

Sponsor Note: *Sponsors may begin setting up exhibits in the Alpine Room (Level B) after 5 p.m.*

5-6 p.m.
Networking Event for New Members **(Bavarian Room — Bottom Floor)**

6:15 p.m.
Meet in the Enzian Inn lobby for no-host dinners.

6:30 p.m. No-Host Dinners & Networking

Thursday, October 22

Morning

7:30–9 a.m. Conference Registration Level 2 – Enzian Inn

8:15 a.m. Alphorn Performance — Continental (Level 4 – Enzian Inn)

7:30–9 a.m. Enzian Inn Continental Breakfast (Level 4 – Enzian Inn)
Breakfast is provided by the Enzian Inn for registered hotel guests only.

General Session

Alpine Room (Level B)

9–9:30 a.m.

Welcome

Jenn Markaryan
2026–27 WSPRA President

WSPRA Member Introductions

Platinum Plus Sponsor Introductions (Apptegy, Final Site & Parent Square - 3 min. each)

9:30–9:40 a.m. A Message from Your NSPRA Northwest Region Vice President
Presenter: David Beil

9:40–9:50 a.m. WISE - Simple Majority for School Bonds
Presenter: Lesley Rogers

9:50–10 a.m. PDC election communication regulation
Presenter: Monique Dugaw & Catherine Carbonne Rogers

10–10:15 a.m. Break

10:15–11:15 a.m.

Morning Keynote

Sean Goode, Founder - Movement Makers

11:15-11:30 Gold Sponsor Introductions

11:30–11:45 a.m. Networking with Sponsors
Visit sponsors, collect passport stamps and connect with industry partners before lunch.

11:45 a.m.–1 p.m. Lunch & Networking — Continental (Level 4)

Breakout Tracks Intro

1–1:15 p.m. Introducing the 2026 Conference Tracks
Presenter: Ruth Richardson, 2026–27 WSPRA President-Elect
Choose the learning path that best matches your role—or mix and match throughout the conference.

Navigate — Foundations

Practical skills for every communicator, especially those wearing multiple hats in small districts or new to school communications.

Create — Creative Studio

Storytelling, digital media, design and content creation techniques that help school districts engage their communities.

Lead — Strategy

Leadership, organizational communication and executive-level decision making for communication directors and district leaders.

Breakout Session One

1:15–1:45 p.m.

Navigate — Foundations

Danube Room (Level 4)
The Recipe for an Effective Election Mailer
Presenter: Melissa Burt
Senior Graphic Designer & Content Strategist, ESD 112

Creating an effective bond or levy mailer takes the right mix of required information, thoughtful design and clear communication. Drawing on 10 years of experience designing hundreds of election mailers for more than 60 Washington school districts, Melissa will share ESD 112's tried-and-true recipe for putting those ingredients together. Explore examples from recent bond and levy measures, learn practical design and content tips, and leave with ideas you can use whether you create materials in-house or work with a professional designer. Bonus: Bring your most recent bond or levy mailer, and Melissa will provide personalized feedback and suggestions after the conference.

Create — Creative Studio

Alpine Room (Level B)
Storytelling That Gets Noticed
Presenter: Jeanie Lindsay
Public Relations & Communications
Marysville School District

Great storytelling begins long before you write the first sentence. Drawing from her experience as both a journalist and a school district communicator, Jeanie shares what makes stories newsworthy, what reporters truly need from school districts and how strong media relationships can increase trust and expand the reach of your district's message.

Lead — Strategy

Bavarian Room (Level B)

Leadership Roundtable: Building High-Performing Communication Teams
Presenters:

- Mark Sherwood — Executive Director of Communications, Issaquah Public Schools
- Sarah Gillispie — Communications Director, Communications and Information Department, Puyallup School District
- Kristen Jaudon — Executive Director of Strategy & Engagement ESD 113

Successful communication departments don't happen by accident. Join communication leaders from districts across Washington for an open discussion about hiring, coaching staff, managing workloads, supporting professional growth and creating collaborative teams that thrive during both everyday operations and high-pressure situations.

1:45–2 p.m. Networking Break & Sponsor Visits

Breakout Session Two

2–2:45 p.m.

Navigate — Foundations

Danube Room (Level 4)
Digital Accessibility: Practical Steps Toward Compliance
Presenter: Kaitlyn Hall, CPACC
Vice President–Elect, WSPRA
Assistant Director - Communications, ESD 113

Digital accessibility is a key part of inclusive, ethical and effective school communication. Kaitlyn will begin with an overview of digital accessibility, why it matters and how recent updates to federal accessibility requirements affect school districts and educational organizations. Participants will explore practical best practices, compliance requirements and common pitfalls in key areas such as websites, PDFs, email and social media, and leave with resources and strategies they can use to build consistent accessibility practices across their districts.

Create — Creative Studio

Alpine Room (Level B)
Introduction to Video Editing in Adobe Premiere Pro
Presenter: Logan Nickels
Digital Communications Specialist
North Kitsap School District

Designed for communicators with little to no Premiere Pro experience, this introductory session covers the basics of creating and editing video in Adobe Premiere Pro. Logan will demonstrate how to import footage, use essential editing tools, add subtitles and title cards, balance audio, add music and use other core functions to create polished videos.

Lead — Strategy

Bavarian Room (Level B)

Working 9 to 5, Communicating 365: Building Relationships Before, During, and After the Election Season
Presenters: Justine Vazquez, Melissa Burt & Monique Dugaw
Educational Service District 112

Community understanding isn't built in a single election season. This session explores how consistent, purposeful communication can help districts build relationships and community understanding before a resolution is placed on the ballot, through Election Day and long after the votes are counted. Justine, Melissa and Monique will share strategies for making year-round communication part of a district's long-term approach to building trust and keeping communities informed.

2:45–3 p.m. Networking Break & Sponsor Visits
Continental Room – Level 4

General Session

Continental Room (Level 4)
3–4 p.m.
The Space Between

Presenter: Tove Tupper, APR
Executive Director of Communications
Highline Public Schools
2026 NSPRA School Communicator of the Year

What if becoming a better communicator has less to do with what you say and more to do with how you see? Tove shares the deeply personal story of a teacher who changed her life and the unexpected lessons that have shaped her approach to leadership, storytelling and

communication. Through personal stories, practical examples and lessons from her career in school communications, attendees will explore how shifting perspective can strengthen trust, deepen empathy and help communities see what's possible in their schools.

4-4:15 p.m. Day One Wrap-Up - Jenn Markaryan

4:15–5 p.m. Dinner Break — Get Dolly'd Up!

Take a break, recharge and get ready for the evening. In honor of Dolly, we invite you to dress a little fabulous for tonight's Awards Banquet. Sparkle, rhinestones, fringe, big hair or simply your favorite dinner attire — however you interpret Dolly, have fun with it!

5–6 p.m. Networking Social (Level 4)

6–8 p.m. Awards Banquet (Level 4)

Dinner • Recognition • Celebration

Friday, October 23

7:30–9 a.m. Breakfast & Networking with Sponsors (Level 4)
Breakfast is available for registered Enzian Inn guests only.

General Session

9–9:15 a.m. Welcome Back
Jenn Markaryan
WSPRA President

Breakout Session Three

9:15–10:15 a.m.

Navigate — Foundations

Danube Room (Level 4)
Building Transparency and Trust with Public Records Compliance
Presenter: Evelyn Sisk
Ferndale School District

Public records work is about more than responding to requests—it requires strong systems, shared responsibility and districtwide understanding. Evelyn will share practical strategies for advocating for dedicated public records staffing, developing achievable processes, cross-training staff and building awareness throughout your organization. Learn how thoughtful records management and compliance practices can save time and money while strengthening transparency and public trust.

Create — Creative Studio

Alpine Room (Level B)

Mic'd Up: The Simple Video Series That Overdelivers
Presenters: Jim Hazelton and Brett Allbery
Spokane Public Schools

A simple video concept can become one of your district's most effective storytelling tools. Jim will share how Spokane Public Schools created Mic'd Up, a recurring series that gives families and community members an authentic glimpse inside schools while celebrating the students and staff who make them special. Learn how the team chooses subjects and situations that naturally create engaging interactions, captures footage with a simple camera-and-microphone setup, and edits it into short, punchy videos that consistently perform well on social media. Jim will also share lower-cost ways to recreate the concept using a phone and wireless microphone, plus a bonus look at the district's Kid's Eye View series.

Lead — Strategy

Bavarian Room (Level B)
From Marketing to Momentum: How a Community Connection Project Built the Foundation for Bond and Levy Communications

Presenters:
• Harmony Weinberg

• Jennifer Goodhart
• Mariah Lane
Everett Public Schools
What happens when a school district stops thinking about “marketing” as promotion and starts thinking about it as connection? Everett Public Schools will share how an effort to increase district visibility evolved into a comprehensive Community Connection Project built around branding, partnerships, storytelling and a stronger presence beyond school walls. Learn how that year-round work created a foundation for bond and levy communications, including the important distinction between the district’s factual, informational role and an independent citizen committee’s advocacy role. Participants will leave with practical ideas for building community understanding and trust long before an election is on the horizon.

10:15–10:45 a.m. Networking & Hotel Checkout

Sponsor Breakout Sessions

10:45–11:15 a.m.

Danube Room (Level 4)

Apptegy

A District of Choice at Every Stage: What Families Really Want at Each School Level
Presenter: Brittany Keil

Transitions are when family loyalty is most fragile — and most winnable. When a child approaches a new school level, even satisfied families enter genuine decision-making mode, suddenly open to alternatives they never considered. This study draws on survey data from parents who made a school enrollment decision within the past year, spanning the three pivotal K–12 transitions: Pre-K to Kindergarten, Elementary to Middle School, and Middle to High School. Using a structured factor-ranking methodology, we produce the first direct comparison of what families actually prioritize at each stage — from classroom warmth and belonging in the early years, to AP offerings and college outcomes as students near graduation.

The findings reveal not just *what* families want, but *when* they want it, *who* they trust, and *what moment* crystallizes their final choice. For district leaders and communicators, the result is clear, actionable intelligence: where you're winning families, where you're losing them, and what it would actually take to change that.

Alpine Room (Level B)
Finalsite

Work Smarter, Reach Everyone: Tips and Tricks for School Communicators
Presenters: Tim Weber and Amanda Ralston, MBA, Edmonds School District

Families are getting more messages than ever and still asking, "Where do I find that?" In this fast-paced, practical session, a communications leader from Amanda Ralston Edmonds School District and Finalsite's Tim Weber share their favorite tips and tricks for reaching every family, from the district desk and from districts across the country. You'll see:

- *quick website fixes that make answers easy to find*
- *simple accessibility wins ahead of the ADA deadline*
- *AI shortcuts that answer families' questions and save your team hours*
- *time-saving hacks you can use Monday morning*

Bring your best hack to share. You'll leave with ready-to-use AI prompts and one change you can make this week.

Bavarian Room (Level B)
ParentSquare

All In: How Transformational Family Partnerships Can Solve the Attendance Crisis
Presenters: Cara Stanislaw and Aliza Wilson

With chronic absenteeism rates remaining stubbornly high, it's time to focus on proven, high-leverage strategies. We will dissect what "effective engagement" truly means, moving beyond bake sales to impactful practices like relational home visits, proactive communication, and shared decision-making. Participants will learn how to implement a tiered system of family engagement that addresses the root causes of absenteeism and builds a powerful network of support around every student. Leave with a clear, actionable framework for integrating family engagement into your school or district's attendance improvement plan.

11:15–11:30 a.m. Networking Break & Final Sponsor Visits
Alpine Room – (Level B)

Closing Session

11:30 a.m.–Noon Closing Remarks - Jenn Markaryan

Noon - Sponsor Passport Prize Drawings - Evelyn Sisk

12:30 p.m. — Children's Book Donation to Leavenworth School District
Cascade School District Office

In the spirit of this year's theme, *More than 9 to 5: The Heart Behind School Communications*, WSPRA members are invited to join us in giving back to our host community. Please bring a new children's book to the conference for WSPRA to donate to the Cascade School District library.

Members who are able to stay are invited to meet at the Cascade School District Office at **12:30 p.m.** as we present the donated books together.