



Executive Board

President

Terry Brandon, ESD 123

President Elect

Dale McDaniel, CRESD 113

Members

June Sine	NEWESD 101
James Sebree	ESD 105
Darlene Stickel	ESD 112
Dale McDaniel	CRESD 113
Ann Byrnes	OESD 114
Mehret	
Tekle-Awarun	PSESD 121
Terry Brandon	ESD 123
Marcia Henkle	NCESD 171
Merle Kirkley	NWESD 189

Superintendents

Rob Roettger	NEWESD 101
Shane Backlund	ESD 105
Tim Merlino	ESD 112
Flip Herndon	ESD 113
Aaron Leavell	OESD 114
John Welch	PSESD121
Steve McCullough	ESD 123
Michelle Price	NCESD 171
Ismael "Ish"	
Vivanco	NWESD 189

AESD Staff

Jessica Vavrus, Exec. Director
Melissa Gombosky, Legislative
Liaison
Shayna Burmeister, Assistant

Executive Board Members Present: Terry Brandon, Dale McDaniel, Ann Byrnes, James Sebree (virtual), June Sine, Marcia Henkle, Mehret Tekle-Awarun, Merle Kirkley (virtual), Darlene Stickel (virtual)

Superintendents Present: Aaron Leavell (virtual), Ismael Vivanco, Michelle Price, Rob Roettger (virtual), Shane Backlund, Steve McCullough, Tim Merlino

Superintendents Absent: Flip Herndon, John Welch

Staff Present: Jessica Vavrus, Shayna Burmeister

I. Welcome & Consent Agenda

Lead: President, Terry Brandon

For Reference: [1/12/26 meeting minutes \(draft\)](#) | [Today's Meeting Materials](#) | [AESD Key Contacts](#)

President Brandon welcomed the group and invited introductions around the

table. He led the group in the Pledge and reviewed the agenda. President Brandon welcomed review and comment on the January 12, 2026 meeting minutes. Terry asked for a motion to approve the minutes and the January 12, 2026 Consent Agenda. Marcia Henkle moved to adopt the minutes and Consent Agenda. Dale McDaniel seconded the motion. The 1/12/26 minutes and the 1/12/26 Consent Agenda were adopted.

II. ESD Hot Topics, Updates, & Top of Mind Discussion

This time is for Executive Board members and ESD superintendents to elevate important topics of interest and relevance for group learning and discussion.

a. ESD Organizational (internal) Updates

The group discussed upcoming board position changes across several ESDs, including ESD 105, Puget Sound ESD 121, NCESD 171, and Northwest ESD 189.

b. District Updates

Superintendent McCullough shared recent developments related to the Prescott School District. OSPI rescinded its petition to dissolve the district in March after the district secured additional financial support, including \$600,000 in state funding, passage of a local levy, and community fundraising efforts.

c. AESD Accreditation Panel Updates ([Flyer](#) | [School Summary](#))

Superintendent Vivanco provided an update on upcoming Accreditation Panel dates which are now full. A session will be held at ESD 101 in Spokane on May 11, 2026 and two sessions will be held at ESD 113 in Tumwater on May 12–13, 2026.

III. State Legislative Updates & AESD Legislative Priorities (10:30am)

Leads: Melissa Gombosky

For Reference: [2/26/26 Budget Proposal Comparison](#) | [AESD Legislative Platform](#) & [Talking Points](#)

Melissa Gombosky provided the legislative report and shared updates related to the 2026 supplemental budget proposals. The report included comparison information from the Governor, Senate, and House proposals, including policy-level additions and reductions impacting K–12 education. Discussion referenced the state’s paramount duty to fully fund education and the importance of continued attention to legislative budget decisions affecting schools and ESDs.

The budget comparison reflected total supplemental changes of \$169 million in the Governor’s proposal, \$166 million in the Senate proposal, and \$207 million in the House proposal.

IV. Association Business

Lead: Terry Brandon, Jessica Vavrus

For Reference: [AESD Constitution](#) | [Draft 2026 Nominating Committee Report](#)

The AESD Nominating Committee Report was presented to the Executive Board. The 2026 Nominating Committee consisted of Merle Kirkley, Chair; Marcia Henkle, Past President; and June Sine, Executive Board Member. The committee met by teleconference on February 13, 2026, to select a nominee for President-Elect for a two-year term.

Due to her consideration as a nominee, June Sine recused herself from the committee’s discussion and decision regarding the President-Elect nomination. The Nominating Committee put forth June Sine as the nominee for President-Elect. June has served on the NEWESD 101 Board since January 2010 and has been an active member of the AESD Executive Board for many years.

During discussion, Board Member Tekle-Awarun voiced concern regarding individuals who may be interested in future leadership roles and the importance of considering work-life balance challenges, including the demands of parenting and professional responsibilities, when supporting board member participation and leadership development.

a. AESD Association Budget

For Reference: [2025/26 Association Budget Projections & 26/27 Proposed](#)

Terry asked for a motion to approve the proposed amendments to the 2025/26 AESD Association Budget and the proposed 2026/27 AESD Association Budget, in order to move both forward to the AESD membership for adoption at the Annual Business Meeting on April 16, 2026. James Sebree moved to approve the proposed amendments to the 2025/26 AESD Association Budget and the proposed 2026/27 AESD Association Budget. Marcia Henkle seconded the motion. The proposed amendments to the 2025/26 AESD Association Budget and the proposed 2026/27 AESD Association Budget were approved to move forward to the AESD membership for adoption at the 2026 AESD Annual Conference.

V. 2026 Annual Conference Updates & Input

Lead: Aaron Leavell, Ann Byrnes, Jessica Vavrus

For reference: [2026 Web site](#)

a. Registration & Budget Updates

For Reference: [2026 Registration & Budget Snapshot](#)

The group reviewed current registration for the Wednesday Regional Tours, noting that 16 individuals were registered across the combined barge and museum tours. Because transportation arrangements need to be finalized, the group discussed the need to continue promoting the tours and generating excitement around participation.

Feedback indicated that some participants are still determining their arrival timing. The group noted that the 4:00 p.m. hotel check-in time may create hesitancy for some attendees, particularly if weather is inclement and rooms are not yet available. Jessica will send an email to encourage additional interest and response for the Wednesday Regional Tours.

b. Annual Award Nomination Status

The Board reviewed the status of nominations for the annual award. Discussion included the need for a final reminder to encourage additional nominations prior to the March 19, 2026 deadline.

c. Program Design

For Reference: [At-a-Glance](#) | [Wednesday Tour Options](#)

The group discussed the 2026 Annual Conference program design, including the At-a-Glance schedule and Wednesday tour options. The conference will include registration, lunch, and regional tour options on Wednesday, April 15, followed by the conference kick-off reception and dinner on participants' own. Thursday's program will include a keynote and general session with Chan Hellman focused on hope, AESD updates, the annual business meeting, federal updates with AESA, learning sessions, and the President's Reception and AESD Award & Recognition Dinner. Friday's program will include additional general sessions, panel and table discussions, learning sessions, closing reflections, raffle, and adjournment with boxed lunches.

Discussion also included the Wednesday discovery and tour opportunities, including the guided Ocean to Table Tour and Suquamish Museum option, as well as self-led opportunities such as Bloedel Reserve, the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial, the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum—Keyport, and Historic Downtown Poulsbo. The group reviewed these options as part of the overall participant experience and discussed how the tours connect to the conference theme and regional learning opportunities. Jessica will develop talking points for all presenters.

VI. 2027 Annual Conference Discussion

Lead: Jessica Vavrus, Shayna Burmeister

a. 2027 Conference Venue Update

A contract has been signed with Suncadia in Cle Elum, WA for the 2027 AESD Annual Conference. The dates for next year's event are April 14-16, 2027.

Aaron Leavell, Ann Byrnes, and Jessica Vavrus led a discussion regarding 2026 Annual Conference updates. The Board reviewed registration and budget information, including the current status of

board member and staff registration for the conference and Wednesday Tours. Discussion included concern regarding the limited number of ESD board member registrations received to date and ways to encourage additional participation.

The group discussed potential factors impacting registration, including the time of year, proximity to spring break, the number of days participants would need to be away from family and other obligations, travel considerations, and both tangible and intangible costs associated with attending. The group also discussed whether a different time of year or a more centralized location could improve participation, while recognizing challenges related to prime conference season, increased costs, regional rotation, facility capacity, and limited ability to negotiate repeat business with venues.

Additional conversation included the difficulty of identifying venues that can accommodate the group's lodging and meeting space needs, including locations such as Campbell's in Chelan, which is scheduled several years in advance. The group determined that a survey should be sent to the membership to gather additional input regarding conference timing, location, participation barriers, and factors that may help improve future registration.

b. Annual Conference Host Rotation, Venue, & Registration Fees

For Reference: [Annual Conference Venue & Registration Summary](#)

The group discussed the Annual Conference host rotation, venue considerations, and registration fees. Conversation included whether lowering registration fees could help reduce the direct cost of attendance for ESD staff, particularly in the current climate of school districts facing financial challenges. The group also discussed the broader costs associated with conference attendance, including travel logistics, staff time away from regular duties, and other hidden or indirect costs. These considerations were reviewed in relation to venue expenses, regional rotation, and the overall conference budget when evaluating potential adjustments to registration fees. The group agreed to revisit this discussion following the April 2026 conference.

VII. Good of the Order & Adjourn w/ Boxed Lunches

Lead: Terry Brandon / All

President-Elect Dale McDaniel shared that he is looking forward to transitioning into the role of AESD President at the 2026 AESD Annual Conference in April, where he and current President Terry Brandon will participate in the leadership transition. Dale shared preliminary reflections on his vision for the year ahead, including two strategic goals.

His first goal is to attend each of the nine ESD board meetings during the summer to connect directly with board members, briefly share information about AESD and his plans and intentions for the year, and help thread shared experiences across all nine ESDs. He also plans to create a monthly newsletter to be distributed to the membership at the beginning of each month.

UPCOMING: [AESD Calendar of Events](#) | **Next Exec Board Meeting on June 9, 9:30 – 11:30am, ESD 113 (note location change)**