
CHRISTOPHER R. NESMITH

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Visionary educational leader with over 20 years of transformative experience driving innovation, equity, and student success across K-12 systems. Proven track record in strategic planning, budget management, and fostering community partnerships to align education with workforce demands. Nationally recognized for pioneering youth apprenticeship programs, dual credit pathways, and mastery-based learning models that prepare students for post-secondary success. Adept at leading large-scale initiatives, managing multi-million-dollar budgets, and engaging diverse stakeholders to shape policy, modernize facilities, and enhance career readiness. A dynamic and results-driven executive with deep expertise in interagency collaboration, legislative advocacy, and program development to elevate student achievement and district performance.

CORE QUALIFICATIONS

- **Strategic Planning:** Proven ability to lead comprehensive district-wide strategic initiatives, aligning academic goals with community needs to drive educational outcomes and operational efficiency.
- **Community Engagement:** Expert in fostering strong partnerships with families, local businesses, and community organizations to support student success, facility development, and long-term district growth.
- **Career Readiness:** Pioneer in developing career pathways and youth apprenticeship programs, ensuring students graduate with industry-recognized credentials and readiness for post-secondary opportunities.
- **Budget Management:** Extensive experience closing budget deficits through priority-based budgeting, aligning financial resources with district goals, and facilitating interest-based bargaining to achieve fiscal sustainability.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Youth Apprenticeships | Dual Credit Programs | Work-Based Learning | Mastery-Based Learning | Universal Design for Learning (UDL) | Early Learning Initiatives | K-12 Leadership | Policy Development | Workforce Development | Interagency Collaboration | Equity in Education | Facilities Planning | Legislative Advocacy | Program Development | CTE Pathways | School Improvement

WORK HISTORY

Superintendent, Elma School District – Elma, WA, 07/2021 - Current

- Secured the 2025 DA Magazine "District of Distinction" award and led efforts for Elma to be named the 2023 WA SBE School of Recognition and 2024 WSSDA School Board of the Year, positioning the district as a leader in future readiness.
- Directed the creation of a 10-year facilities plan by engaging community stakeholders to align infrastructure priorities with the district's long-term needs.
- Spearheaded the 'Portrait of an Elma Eagle' initiative, linking academic and career goals with district aspirations to support students' post-graduation success.
- Led the district-wide strategic plan, targeting Kindergarten Readiness, Mastery-Based Learning, Career & College Readiness, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to create an inclusive, student-focused education model.
- Collaborated with families and early learning providers, raising the district's kindergarten readiness rate from 35% to over 50% by 2024.
- Established a mastery-based learning system, enabling students to achieve grade-level proficiency through skill-based progress benchmarks.
- Increased post-secondary enrollment by launching dual credit and apprenticeship programs in aerospace, fire science, forestry, healthcare, and education.
- Promoted Universal Design for Learning (UDL), enhancing support for diverse learning needs and increasing inclusion rates for students with IEPs in general education settings.
- Forged partnerships to raise over \$2 million, enabling the construction of a community-backed athletic stadium and improving access to quality athletic facilities.
- Partnered with organizations such as the Gates Foundation, AJAC, and Grays Harbor College to scale youth apprenticeships and dual credit opportunities, ensuring equitable access to education and careers.
- Resolved a \$2 million budget shortfall through strategic fiscal planning, including priority-based budgeting, interest-based bargaining, and streamlining operations to align with district goals.
- Played a key role in shaping education policies through participation in national initiatives such as AASA Redefining Ready and Washington Education Research Association (WERA), while scaling work-based learning and apprenticeship models statewide.

Co-Lead, Redefining Ready, AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 04/2019 - Current

- Led national cohorts of superintendents, driving district-wide improvements in community engagement, student achievement, and operational excellence.
- Guided superintendents across the U.S. in aligning district goals with rigorous academic standards and career readiness pathways, ensuring measurable student success.
- Provided strategic expertise in managing district budgets, maximizing community resources, and fostering collaborative labor relations through interest-based bargaining.
- Developed and scaled nationally recognized frameworks for career and college readiness, adopted by districts nationwide to boost student achievement and deepen community engagement.
- Spearheaded the design and implementation of innovative youth apprenticeship and work-based learning models, expanding career pathways in high-demand industries and influencing state and national education policy.

- Championed equity-driven initiatives, integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and mastery-based education to ensure inclusive, personalized learning experiences that drive academic growth for all students.
- Built cross-sector partnerships with higher education, industry leaders, and government agencies to create seamless K-12 to post-secondary pipelines, enhancing workforce development and economic mobility.
- Collaborated with policymakers to shape education legislation, ensuring equitable access to dual credit, apprenticeships, and work-based learning programs that align with future workforce demands.

Executive Director of Innovation, West Valley School District – Yakima, WA, 07/2016 - 06/2021

- Developed career pathways aligned with high-demand local industries, establishing a model that influenced statewide career readiness initiatives and became a blueprint for other districts.
- Hosted the WA State Board of Education, showcasing the West Valley Apprenticeship model, which directly shaped Washington's policy on integrating work-based learning (WBL) and apprenticeships into high school completion requirements under HB 1599.
- Advised districts statewide as a Washington Career Connect consultant, driving the adoption of apprenticeship standards aligned with graduation and career readiness benchmarks.
- Designed and implemented career and technical education (CTE) models, creating STEM and 21st-century skill pathways recognized as exemplary at state and national levels, setting new standards for K-12 career alignment.
- Influenced state policy by collaborating on initiatives to ensure dual credit and apprenticeships counted as viable pathways to college and career readiness, broadening opportunities for students.
- Expanded dual credit access, overseeing Advanced Placement (AP), College in the High School, and CTE Dual Credit programs to provide students with academic and technical post-secondary credits.
- Built strategic relationships with state legislators, advocating for policies that expanded WBL and apprenticeships in K-12 education, driving reforms to create equitable career pathways for all students.
- Established collaborations with regional employers and industry leaders to provide students with hands-on learning experiences, certifications, and direct access to career opportunities in high-demand sectors.
- Achieved measurable improvements in graduation rates, college readiness, and career placement through innovative WBL programs and data-driven alignment of district resources with student success outcomes.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **Superintendent Intern** – West Valley SD – 07/2017 - 07/2019
- **Lead Building Administrator – Freshman Campus** – West Valley SD – 07/2014 - 06/2016
- **High School Assistant Principal** – West Valley SD – 07/2013 - 06/2014
- **Computer Science / Business Education Teacher** – Shelton School District – 08/2006 - 06/2013

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Keynote Speaker, Re-imagining Community Partnerships – National ACTE WBL Summit – 2025**
- **Post-Secondary Readiness Summit, Re-imagining Community Partnerships – WERA – 2025**
- **Presenter, Ai and its impact on learning outcomes – AASA National Conference (NCE) – 2025**
- **Presenter, Redefining Post-Secondary Preparedness – AASA National Conference (NCE) – 2025**
- **District of Distinction Winner – DA Magazine (Top School in US for Future Readiness) – 2025**
- **WSSDA Small School Board of the Year – 2024**
- **Panelist, Early Learning Readiness – Grays Harbor Health Symposium – 2024**
- **School of Recognition (Student Growth in Math and ELA) – WA State Board of Education – 2023**
- **Keynote Speaker, Career Readiness through Community Partnerships – WA STEM Conference – 2022**
- **Keynote Speaker, Closing, Building a Culture for Career Readiness – WA-ACTE State Conference – 2022**
- **Presenter, Building Post-Secondary Preparedness Indicators – AASA National Conference – 2022**
- **Presenter, Post-Secondary Planning – WASA/AWSP Summer Conference – 2019**
- **Site Tour, Graduation Requirements – WA State Board of Education – 2018**
- **Presenter, Community Partnerships for Career Paths – ACT National Workforce Summit – 2018**
- **Presenter, Subject Matter Expert on Youth Apprenticeships – Western Governors' Association – 2018**
- **Forum Speaker, WA Innovations in Education – WA Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) – 2018**
- **Fire Science / Student Volunteer Fire Fighters (WBL) – WA State Auditor (Leading Practices for Secondary CTE Programs) – 2017**
- **Registered Youth Apprenticeship Pilot – AJAC (Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee) – 2017**
- **District of Distinction Winner for Career and College Readiness – District Administration Magazine – 2016**
- **Innovative District for Career and College Readiness (Youth Apprenticeships) – National Model Schools – 2016**
- **AP College Board Honor Roll District – 2015 - 2016**
- **United States Education Delegation to Berlin and Erfurt, Germany (Youth Apprenticeship) – 2016**
- **Microsoft National Model School (Top Student Achievement) – 2015 - 2021**
- **Boeing Premier Partner School – 2015 - 2021**

STATE & FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT

- **Launch: Equitable Pathways for All**, National Consortium of Graduation Pathways Redesign, Member – 02/2023 - Presenter
- **Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC)**, Superintendent Advisory Committee, Committee Member – 11/2023 – Present
- **REVIT: Washington Clean Energy Youth Apprenticeship Pathway Design**, K-12 Education to Employer Partnership Consultant, 01/2023 – Present
- **Washington Para to Teacher Registered Apprenticeship**, Grant and Project Manager, 01/2022 - 06/2023

- **Washington State Labor and Industries Apprenticeship Council**, Committee on Apprenticeship Preparedness, Policy Governance Member – 03/2023 - 03/2024
- **WA State Paraeducators Registered Apprenticeship Steering Committee**, Youth Apprenticeship Leadership Representative, 04/2019 - 04/2024
- **Career Connect – Olympia, WA**, Governor's Youth Apprenticeship Summit – Legislative Policy Moderator, January 2018, South Central Washington Consultant, 01/2018 - Present
- **Association of Washington Business – Olympia, WA**
 - Keynote, Rural Economic Development Summit – 03/2017
 - Presenter, Legislative Hill Climb – 01/2018
 - Keynote, Workforce Summit – 03/2018
- **Panelist, Western Governors' Association**, Youth Apprenticeship Policy Member, 10/2017
- **Center on the Economics and Management of Education and Training Systems (CEMETS)**, ETH Zurich, Switzerland, Participant – 06/2017 - 10/2017
- **Washington STEM – Seattle, WA**, Economic Labor Data Consultant, 10/2016 - 05/2017
- **AUTHOR, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) – Olympia, WA**, – Early Childhood Education (ECE) Certification Toolkit, 10/2016 - 08/2017

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- **Providence Swedish Hospital Community Mission Board** – 01/2024 - Present
- **Yakima Valley Regional CTE Advisory** – 08/2017 – 07/2021
- **Yakima Valley College – Bachelors of Applied Science, Teacher Education K-8, Professional Education Advisory Board** – 03/2017 - 07/2021
- **Southwest Yakima Rotary** – 10/2014 - 07/2021
- **Yakima Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Yakima, Grad** – 09/2015 - 06/2016

PRESS RELEASES

- **Career exploration: How Washington schools are setting the course**, District Administration Magazine – 12/3/2024
- **Apprenticeships and internships are key to building workforce pipeline**, Puget Sound Business Journal – 07/17/2024
- **Elma Steps up to Build Football Stadium**, Daily World – 06/14/2024
- **Developing Interorganizational Relationships in Career Pathway Design**, WERA, Washington Education Research Association – 05/29/2024
- **Learning Loss May Cost Students Billions in Future Earnings. How Districts Are Responding**, Ed Week – 03/15/2024
- **Grays Harbor College announces local high school seniors offered direct admission to the college**, KXRO News Radio – 04/12/2024
- **GHC/Elma School District part of new partnership for student learning**, KXRO News Radio – 01/10/2024
- **Mastering Fundamentals in Two Arenas**, AASA Magazine Member Spotlight – 12/1/2023
- **Youth apprenticeships teach students real-life skills**, Association of Washington Business (WA Chamber of Commerce) – 12/19/2023
- **GHC/Elma School District part of new partnership for student learning**, KXRO News Radio – 11/16/2023
- **Some WA schools opt for 'show what you know' system over letter grades**, Seattle Times – 08/3/2022
- **Washington State Apprenticeship & Training Council**, Department of Labor and Industries - 2021 Annual Report
- **AUTHOR, Comment: Apprenticeships can help meet state's teacher needs** - Everett Herald – 12/19/2021
- **Yakima Herald 39 under 39 – Chris Nesmith, West Valley School District**, Yakima Herald – 02/28/2021
- **West Valley's Innovation Center to move forward next fall in former Freshman Campus (WBL School)**, Yakima Herald – 12/17/2020
- **You have 15 days to weigh in on Washington's new high-school graduation requirements**, Seattle Times – 10/14/2019
- **How West Valley School District Prepares Students for Success** – League of Education Voters – 08/26/2019
- **AUTHOR, In West Valley, students have more career options** – Yakima Herald – 05/18/2019
- **Education for Life: From Wood and Metal to Semiconductors and Programming**, Education Northwest – 04/2018

EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Educational Administration, Washington State University – Everett, WA, 07/2017 – Expected 04/2025

- Superintendent Certification – 2019
- **Dissertation: "Forging Trustful Connections: A Case Study on The Role of Trust in Forming Inter-Organizational Relationships for Youth Apprenticeship Programs in Career and Technical Education in Washington State"**

Professional Administrator (Principal) Certification, Seattle Pacific University – Seattle, WA, 09/2015 – 06/2016

Career and Technical Education (CTE) Director Certification, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) – Olympia, WA, 08/2011 – 06/2012

Master of Education (M.Ed.), Educational Administration - University of Washington – Tacoma, WA, 08/2008 – 06/2010

- Residency Administrator (Principal) Certification

Bachelor of Science (B.S.), Business Education, Central Washington University – Ellensburg, WA, 01/2004 – 06/2006

- Washington State Teacher Certification
- Washington State CTE Certification