

ISBA/IAPSS Fall Conference
October 3rd and 4th, 2022
Amy Austin Conference Report

Monday - Keynote

The speaker, a mother whose daughter was murdered in the Sandy Hook shooting, was incredibly moving. My daughters were the same ages as the kids who were killed at the time, and like so many parents I was sickened and horrified by what happened that day. I thought her suggestions regarding communication and emergency dismissal were sensible and helpful, and I hope they're things we never, ever have to put into practice in our school community.

Session 1

Get the UNITY in Community!

This session included several good ideas for connecting with local businesses, and then leveraging those relationships into donations and sponsorships. There was a heavy emphasis on realtors, and building relationships with them. I feel like we do a good job of this at WL. The Russell family has been a great supporter of the schools, and so has the Alexander Group, to name just a couple. I also really liked the idea of the Good News postcards that teachers can send home when they catch a student being good, and then the parents will often put a photo on social media. That's brilliant.

Session 2

The Benefits of a Strong School/Police Partnership

The most memorable thing they shared is that over 200 first responders, some from Illinois, showed up when they heard there was an active shooter at their high school. I can easily imagine the same thing happening in West Lafayette. Thank goodness there wasn't an actual shooter that day, but they learned a lot of valuable lessons that echoed the keynote speaker's remarks.

Session 3

Cutting through the Misinformation to Inform and Enhance Public Perception of your District

The best takeaway idea was to create a legislative advocacy group. I would meet with parents and stakeholders during the legislative session, explain why the legislation is important, and ask the group to contact their legislators and also to share the information with their networks. I think this could be a powerful way to make real change in Indiana's education landscape. There were several other good ideas but that's the one that aligned most with my position as legislative liaison.

Tuesday - Keynote

Clint Swindall

"Every day you show up to work you are either adding to or taking away from the culture of your corporation. There is no middle ground."

This presentation made me think about my own attitude and how I might bring the people around me down by complaining about negative influences. I'm going to work on stopping that.

Session 1

The Positive Effect of Mentoring on Low SES Students

This presentation was done by two Purdue professors, which was interesting. I think they're doing excellent work. I can think of several ways that we could implement similar programs in our schools. The main takeaway is that having positive adult role models to show students the way to success improves their outcomes, and I don't think that's predicated on SES, necessarily. I think all students benefit from successful adult role models.

Session 2

Please Limit Your Comments to 3 Minutes: A Transparent, Efficient, Fluid Method for Board Meetings

I think the form that they have speakers sign up on, which lists the rules and guidelines for public comments, is something we should think about using in West Lafayette. I took a copy for us to consider using. I also liked the way the superintendent who gave this presentation organizes his meetings using PowerPoint with hyperlinks to additional information, but I don't think Dr. Greiner would appreciate being directed to completely re-configure the way he does his work. How one approaches such decisions is as personal as how one keeps their calendar or to-do list.