



# ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1021 8th Ave. S.E. · Olympia, WA 98501-1500  
800.562.6100 · 360.357.7951 · FAX: 360.357.7966 · www.awsp.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## CONTACT

Paula Quinn  
Director of Elementary Programs  
and Professional Development  
360.357.7951 | 800.562.6100  
paula@awsp.org

## Taj Jensen Named Washington State 2015 Elementary Principal of the Year

*Clover Park School District principal levels the playing field for all students*

**OLYMPIA**—Tyee Park Elementary School Principal **Taj Jensen** was named this year's Washington State Elementary School Principal of the Year by a panel of principals representing the Elementary School Principals Association of Washington (ESPAW), a component of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). Jensen was one of three finalists chosen from a field of 18 statewide nominees. He learned of the news at an administrative staff meeting the afternoon of March 10.



Jensen (right) is presented with the Elementary Principal of the Year by AWSP's Jerry Bender.

Jensen earned the honor for his work as principal at Tillicum Elementary, where he lead from 2009-2014. Transforming the school was only one piece of the puzzle. By the end of his fifth year at Tillicum, he transformed the community to value education as a vehicle to better themselves and the community as a whole. The school was extremely low achieving with a 96 percent free and reduced price lunch rate.

Jensen, at the request of Superintendent Debbie LeBeau, moved to Tyee Park Elementary, a priority school (lowest 5 percent performer in the state) this school year. The move gives him the opportunity to replicate his success from Tillicum, where he turned the school from a Step 1 school to winning a National Title 1 School award in five years. Jensen stated, "The level of trust and support shown by the district office with regard to my work as an administrator who turns schools around was humbling, as well as very motivating as I am one who strives for perfection. My passion is leveling the playing field for all students. To be awarded the opportunity to continue to 'fight the fight' at a school with limitless potential is an opportunity I will continue to take as a privilege."

"Under Taj's leadership, Tillicum was named a School of Distinction for two years in a row and in 2014 received the Title I, Part A award, the only school in Pierce County to receive the award," said Clover Park School District Superintendent Debbie LeBeau. "We are very proud of Taj and his staff and this recognition is well deserved."

Jensen began his principal career as an assistant principal at Sheridan Elementary (Spokane SD) career in 2006. Before that, he taught as a fifth-grade teacher at Saltar's Point Elementary in the Steilacoom Historical School District. Jensen graduated in 2000 from the University of Redlands in Redlands, California. He earned his Master's in Education Leadership from City University in 2006.

### National Distinguished Principal of the Year Program

Jensen will be honored this fall in Washington D.C. as part of the [National Distinguished Principal of the Year program](#), which is sponsored by the [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and VALIC. All state winners participate in a series of events and activities over the course of two days, culminating in a formal awards banquet. There is no national winner at the elementary level.

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