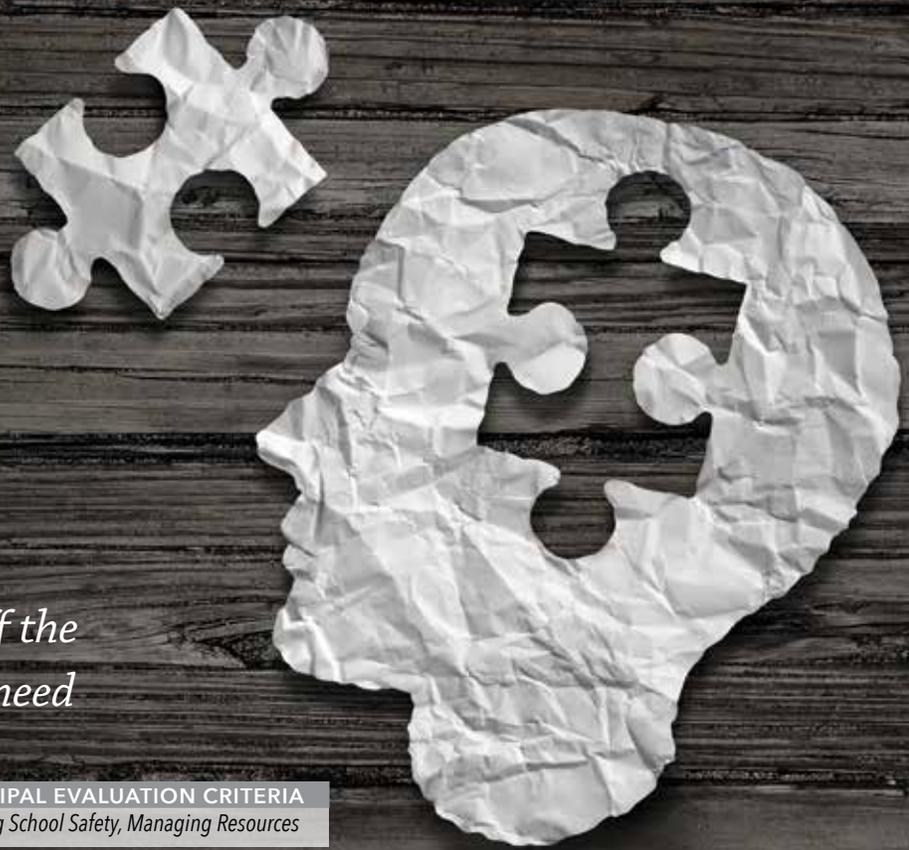


TIME TO FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS



Getting our students and staff the mental health resources they need

Roz Thompson

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PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA
Ensuring School Safety, Managing Resources

This fall, I heard many stories from principals about their difficulty helping students with mental health issues. Because of the severity and variety of our students' needs, increasing support for mental health in schools is prominently featured on our 2018 legislative platform. We can't get to student learning until we fix some of the personal problems our students face.

State Rep. Pat Sullivan, D-Covington, told our Advocacy Committee in October Washington state is 49th in the nation for mental health funding. Schools face challenges because our communities face challenges. Staffing shortages in critical positions and areas of our state hurt our ability to get help for students. Funding shortages for resources to support students hurts as well.

However, we are taking steps to coordinate systems of support for students and their families. The conversation about supporting

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children's mental health needs is receiving a lot of attention this legislative session. In this issue of Washington Principal, OSPI's Dr. Mona Johnson provides an update on recent legislation addressing mental health needs in schools.

I attended a Children's Mental Health Work Group work session in December and connected with Dr. Johnson and others working on significant ways to help our students. Besides the pilot project she describes happening in two of our ESDs, there is also a group planning a Washington Mental Health Summit at the University of Washington on May 8.

I met with the summit's planning group at the end of January. They are particularly interested in connecting

with principals. This team is made up of people from the University of Washington, Seattle Children's Hospital, the SMART Center (School Mental Health Research and Training), DSHS, SeaKing Public Health, OSPI, ESDs, and more. One of their goals is to help provide curriculum and training around mental health to schools.

This group knows principals lead instruction in their schools and they believe we are a key player in leading conversations around mental health. Stay tuned for more information about further training and resources. If you are interested in getting involved with this effort, let me know. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit the Washington Mental Health Summit website at:
wamhsummit.org

The event in May is open to anyone who wants to attend. To register for this event, head to:
wamhsummit.org/may-summit