



ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bellingham Administrator Named 2014 Assistant Principal of the Year

Ann Buswell Is a Key Driver of Success at Whatcom Middle School

No one likes to play the heavy. Carrying out unpleasant tasks (such as disciplining middle-schoolers) could drain the joy and warmth right out of an administrator. Not Ann Buswell. As a long-time assistant principal at Whatcom Middle School, she consistently displays passion, energy and excitement when it comes to her students. Her methods have paid off: disciplinary referrals and failing grades are at their lowest level in the past 10 years.

Buswell is the Washington State 2014 Assistant Principal of the Year. The award is bestowed by the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals (AWMLP), a governing board of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). The honor alternates yearly between a middle level principal and a high school principal. This year it's the middle level's turn.

Being an assistant principal is more than handling discipline, of course. Buswell's principal, Jeff Coulter, credits her with "helping to lead the transformation of Whatcom as a typical junior high to a vibrant middle school known for its exceptional instructional practices and positive school culture."

Buswell was chosen Assistant Principal of the Year for her role in Whatcom's instructional and structural metamorphosis during the past 10 years. Instructionally, Buswell helped make the switch from content area teachers working independently to teaching teams that share the same group of students along with dedicated collaboration time. The reorganization took place in the 2003-2004 school year and has since created a culture of professional exploration and collaboration, not to mention a new climate of trust.

Structurally, Buswell's "composed and selfless response" to the fire that devastated Whatcom's building in 2009 allowed the school to rebuild—both physically and emotionally—with teamed learning in mind. Buswell's interest in national best practices surrounding middle schools fueled unique instructional spaces in the building that fit the school's new learning philosophy.

"Kids learn and change when working with Ann on discipline issues," said Don Rash, AWSP's director of middle level programs. "But her impact is larger than that. Whatcom wouldn't be where it is today without Ann's strong leadership."

Buswell has served as assistant principal at Whatcom Middle School since 1997. Previously she taught at Shuksan Middle School as a sixth grade core teacher from 1990-1997. She earned a bachelor's in English from the University of Northern Iowa, and both a teaching certificate and a master's in school administration from Western Washington University.

Gov. Jay Inslee will honor Buswell for her Assistant Principal of the Year award at the [Washington Educators' Conference](#) in Seattle in late October. She also will be recognized in spring 2014 in Washington D.C. as part of the pool of candidates for the [National Assistant Principal of the Year Award](#). See a list of past state winners and learn more about the award at www.awsp.org/AWSP/About/Awards/AssistantPrincipaloftheYear.

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