

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennifer Fellingner, Director of Communications  
Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)  
360.357.7951 or 360.915.4118 (mobile)  
jennifer@awsp.org

**State's Middle Level Principal of the Year  
Honor Goes to North Thurston Leader**  
*Karen Owen relentless in her support of student learning*

OLYMPIA—Jan. 28, 2010—Driven by a sense of personal and moral obligation to her students, Nisqually Middle School Principal Karen Owen never accepts the bare minimum. *All* students, she says, can learn at high levels. This relentless support of student achievement has earned Owen the respect of her staff and colleagues. Today, it earned her the title of 2010 Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year.

Owen has been named this year's Middle Level Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). A panel of principals representing the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals, a component of AWSP, selected Owen from eight regional finalists.



*Owen*

Owen, who has served as principal of Nisqually Middle School (North Thurston Public Schools) since 2004, says meeting minimal accountability requirements doesn't cut it when it comes to student learning. "At Nisqually," she says, "we have created a culture that reaches beyond a basic awareness of accountability to the actual implementation of programs, interventions and strategies that put us on a path to true and measurable achievement."

Owen's passionate leadership in these programs has helped cultivate success within Nisqually's highly diverse student body, which includes a 46 percent free/reduced lunch rate and 14 percent special education population. The middle school's "Steps to Success" intervention reaches out to students most likely to feel disengaged from the learning process; the goal is to "hook" these students on the classroom experience by establishing a welcoming, structured school environment where they can develop communication, problem solving and stress management skills. Nisqually's tutorial program provides personalized, targeted small group instruction during the school day, and encourages families to become more involved in their child's academic and behavioral progress.

With Owen's guidance, staff members and administrators have formed professional learning community (PLC) data teams to address the needs of students more effectively. The teams collaborate to set and reset instructional goals on an ongoing basis, ensuring that the bar consistently moves higher.

— more —

Maddy de Give, executive director of student support services for North Thurston Public Schools, attributes Owen's success to the amount of time she spends in classrooms, where she provides feedback and acknowledgment for student learning. "Her unflagging energy and enthusiasm for developing staff and for supporting students are hallmarks of Karen's leadership," says de Give.

"From my first day in the district, Karen gained my utmost respect," says Raj Manhas, North Thurston superintendent. "She is an amazing leader, and it is inspiring to see her work—always keeping student learning as the focus."

AWSP Executive Director Gary Kipp echoes the applause for Owen's work. "Karen represents the best of the principalship," according to Kipp. "As a leader, her level of engagement and dedication is contagious. She is prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure the success of her students, no matter what challenges they may face."

Crediting the Nisqually staff for their perseverance, Owen says, "Our strength as a staff is a commitment to three basic principles: *All* students can learn at high levels. It is *our* responsibility to assure that all students can learn. It is our personal and moral *obligation* to ensure that this happens."

Owen's credentials include a Master of Educational Administration from City University, a teaching certificate from Austin Peay State University and a Bachelor of Arts from University of Puget Sound.

Owen will be honored with the elementary and high school principals of the year at AWSP's 2010 Principals' Conference Oct. 3–5. She also will travel to Washington, D.C., to represent Washington state at the national level. There, she will be recognized with other state principals of the year at an awards banquet hosted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and MetLife.

Each year, NASSP recognizes outstanding secondary school leaders who have succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students. The program honors principals who have demonstrated excellence in the areas addressed by the selection criteria, including: collaborative leadership; personalization; and curriculum, instruction and assessment. Each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Department of State's Overseas Schools will send one middle level and one high school principal to the national level to compete for the 2011 MetLife/NASSP National Principals of the Year award. From the state winners, six finalists (three middle level, three high school) are selected and eligible for the award. For more information on the National MetLife/NASSP Principal of the Year program, visit [www.principals.org](http://www.principals.org).

#### ***About the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)***

*The Association of Washington School Principals is a professional association serving principals, assistant principals and principals in training. Formed in 1972, the Association now includes more than 3,400 members from public and private elementary, middle and high schools statewide. It is governed by a board of practicing principals composed of members drawn from three grade-specific boards representing the elementary, middle and high school levels. The mission of AWSP is to support principals and assistant principals and the principalship in the education of all students. For more information on the Association, visit the AWSP Web site at [www.awsp.org](http://www.awsp.org).*