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Camas Assistant Principal Wins State Honor, Heads for Nationals

Springy Yamasaki one of three national finalists for leadership award

SEATAC—Feb. 8, 2006—Washington state could be home to the next national Assistant Principal of the Year.

Springy Yamasaki, an assistant principal for Skyridge Mid School in the Camas School District, is this year's Washington state Assistant Principal of the Year and one of three finalists for the national award. The honors were formally announced today during the Association of Washington School Principals' (AWSP) Assistant Principal of the Year luncheon at the Seattle Marriott-SeaTac. The luncheon is held each year in conjunction with AWSP's Assistant Principal Conference.

"There is clearly something good happening in Washington state when it comes to educational leadership," said Gary Kipp, AWSP executive director. "First, there were the teacher of the year finalists. Then last year, Bellingham High Principal Steve Clarke was one of three finalists for the National High School Principal of the Year award. And this year, we were excited to again learn that Springy would represent us in the assistant principal role. It's really rewarding to have so many of our educators highlighted on a national level," he said.

"Springy has been a tremendous asset to the students and staff of Skyridge, and we are very excited to have her representing us at the national level. We look forward to celebrating again when the final results later this spring."

"Springy is very deserving of this award," said Michael Nerland, superintendent, Camas School District. "She has such a deep and binding commitment to providing a positive educational experience for middle school students and she exemplifies all of the fine qualities of an outstanding middle school administrator."

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Yamasaki has been an educator for 22 years, four of which as an administrator. She began her career as a teacher in Hawaii, moving to Washington state in 1994 for teaching positions in the Ephrata and North Beach school districts. In 1998, her career journey brought her to the Camas School District, where she both taught and served as a dean of students.

In 2001, she moved into administration—and her current position—as an assistant principal at Skyridge Mid School. Yamasaki says she initially never even considered going into education, having struggled herself in school as a child. It was her work as a recreational therapist in the criminal division of a state hospital that made her reconsider teaching as a possible profession.

"I struggled with the fact that something must have gone wrong with their childhood and lack of success in school," she wrote in her award application. "I knew I had a calling to work with students and do whatever I could to reach them so they have an opportunity to make good choices. Now when I meet with students to deliver the consequences for their misbehaviors, I spend time with each student so they can develop so they can develop some tools so they do not recreate their misbehavior."

"I always question each student as they leave to make sure they understand they are not bad and that they have a choice to change their behavior."

While Yamasaki herself acknowledges that she is "always balancing and juggling administrative duties with curriculum, instructional and assessment tasks," her efforts on both fronts have made a difference in students' lives. When she first arrived at Skyridge, Yamasaki worked with the school's math teachers to help improve seventh-grade WASL math scores. In 1999, 35.5 percent of seventh-graders at her school were meeting standard on the math WASL. In 2003-04, that figure rose to 50.3 percent—an impressive increase of 14.8 percent. Principal Ray Bell attributes some of the school's improvement directly to Yamasaki's dedication and enthusiasm for learning.

"There are many character traits that can define an effective administrator," said Bell. "Many of these indicators are innate in an individual and thus, almost impossible to teach. My experience with Springy has proven many times over that she has these attributes and uses them continuously to build an ever better middle school."

The NASSP State and National Assistant Principal of the Year Program annually honors a single winner from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools. From that pool of outstanding administrators, one national winner is chosen.

This year's state award is presented by the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals' (AWMLP) Board of Directors. Assistant principals at the middle and high school level alternate nominating duties for this honor each year.

All state and national winners will be honored this spring at a black-tie event in Washington, D.C. During their stay in the nation's capitol, the honorees will participate in professional development and networking activities with their peers.

Interviews for the national award will be conducted during the NASSP Convention in Reno-Tahoe, March 17-19, 2006. The national winner will also be announced at the convention and will be awarded \$5,000, which can be used in their school or for personal professional development. VIRCO Inc. (VIRCO), a school furniture manufacturer, is the sole sponsor of the NASSP State and National Assistant Principal of the Year Program.

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 3,500 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.