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Post Middle School Principal Wins Statewide Honor

Eric DeJong honored for efficiency and encouragement of staff and students

OLYMPIA—March 7, 2006—The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) is pleased to announce that **Eric DeJong**, principal of Post Middle in Arlington Public Schools, has been selected as the 2006 Middle Level Principal of the Year for Washington state.

“The students and staff at Post Middle are fortunate to have someone like Eric DeJong on their team,” said Gary Kipp, AWSP executive director. “Eric’s passion for creating a positive school climate has made a deep and substantial impact on the learning that takes place at his school. Eric has also enhanced school improvement efforts through his commitment to help his students and staff reach their full potentials,” he added. “We are lucky to count Eric among our colleagues here in Washington state.”

DeJong has been a leader at Post Middle for 10 years first serving as assistant principal for three years, then as principal for the past seven. Prior to his administrative experience at Post Middle, DeJong was a math teacher for four years at Sedro-Woolley High in the Sedro-Woolley School District. He holds a bachelor’s degree in education and secondary math from Pacific Lutheran University and he earned his principal certificate and master’s degree in education from the University of Washington.

“Arlington School District is extremely happy that Eric DeJong has been given the honor of Principal of the Year,” said Arlington School District deputy superintendent Warren B. Hopkins. “He is an outstanding educator who has committed his professional career to helping students achieve. He is well deserving of this honor.”

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Post Middle has experienced substantial growth in recent years, jumping in enrollment from 600 to nearly 900 students. But the school has also grown in terms of its achievement. Since 2002, reading scores on the WASL have increased from 43.2 percent to 80 percent and math went from 35.1 percent to 53 percent.

“In the past seven years, Eric has taken a good school and made it even better,” said Hopkins. “Eric has tremendous organizational abilities—his school always operates smoothly and efficiently. He also displays a calm confidence that leads students to respect and like him.”

DeJong attributes these gains, in part, to the institution of the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment, which is both a norm- and criteria-referenced assessment. The purpose of the DRP was to determine what students were at-risk and whose needs were not being met in a traditional classroom setting. The test results inspired the creation of a two-period block for both math and reading. DeJong also strongly attributes Post’s WASL improvements to his teachers and their efforts towards collaborative leadership for the future.

“The task of school improvement can be a very overwhelming prospect,” said DeJong. “While there is an immediate need to help students, teachers and schools become more successful there is an abundance of ‘good ideas’ that research says will make this possible. At Post Middle, our task has been to prioritize the ‘good ideas’ and find those that would have the greatest effect on our student population.”

DeJong was selected as the 2006 Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year by a panel of middle-level principals from across the state. Each year, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (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:

- Educational leadership – Implementation of strategies for improving teaching and learning by putting programs and improvement efforts into action;
- Problem-solving skills – Demonstration of time management skills, resolution of short- and long-term objectives and awareness of current education issues;
- Staff and self-development – Commitment to continued professional growth, teaching of others and fostering creativity; and
- Community service – Involvement in the community in the life of the school and use of community resources for students.

DeJong will be officially honored at the Association of Washington School Principals’ 2006 Principals’ Conference October 15-17 at the Hilton in Vancouver, Wash. As the state winner, DeJong will go on to represent Washington at the national level, as one of more than 50 nominees for the national award. Each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Department of State’s Overseas Schools select one middle level and one high school principal. From these state winners, six finalists (three middle level, three high school) are selected and eligible for the National Principal of the Year award.

For more information on the National MetLife/NASSP Principal of the Year program, visit www.principals.org.

About the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)

The Association of Washington School Principals is a professional association serving principals and assistant principals. Formed in 1972, the Association now includes more than 3,500 members from public and private elementary, middle and high schools statewide. 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.