



ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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White River Leader Earns State High School Principal of the Year Award

Mike Hagadone took on an entire school culture and changed it top to bottom

OLYMPIA – Principal Mike Hagadone often asks himself, “What would an intense and passionate focus on learning look like *if we really meant it?*” The answer to that question is evident to anyone walking the halls of White River High School in Buckley.

Hagadone was named this year’s High School Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). A panel of principals representing the Washington Association of Secondary School Principals, a component of AWSP, selected him out of nine finalists from a field of 22 statewide nominees.

Hagadone has presided over tremendous change at White River. Graduation rates jumped from 85 percent in 2009 to nearly 94 percent in 2010. And almost 70 percent of those grads are attending two- or four-year colleges. Hagadone increased the number of Advanced Placement courses and boosted AP enrollment from 60 students four years ago to 400 students today.

White River also has seen steady improvement in standardized test scores with marked increases in science and math in 2010. And, the number of subgroups meeting Adequate Yearly Progress requirements has risen.

In addition, Hagadone embedded the increasingly popular Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program in all grades. The AVID program places academically average students in advanced classes and provides them other opportunities to succeed in school with the express goal of enrolling in a four-year college.

In his past five years at the helm of White River, Hagadone didn’t just encourage a few teachers to make changes to their classroom routines or to programs here and there. He went after wholesale change, starting at the top. Hagadone shifted the focus of the day-to-day work of faculty and staff. He made sure that instead of ensuring that content was *taught*, that students were in fact *learning*. No easy feat in an era of expanding expectations and shrinking resources.

A key to this success was a collaborative approach. He upended the status quo of individual department chairs and moved to a new leadership model where teams partner horizontally across departments, also vertically within the administration. This collaboration allows them to more nimbly handle school issues, everything from what should be taught and how it should be measured to how to provide common support structures for students across all grades and all classrooms.

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Component Groups of AWSP

Elementary School Principals Association of Washington
Association of Washington Middle Level Principals
Washington Association of Secondary School Principals

National Affiliates

National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals

High School Principal of the Year Honor

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“Leadership is defined in many ways,” said White River’s Superintendent Tom Lockyer. “But to change a high school’s entire culture of learning, instruction *and* interaction is a monumental challenge. Mike made that possible. He led by example and created the guiding coalition in his building that shaped the cultural change.”

As a result, Lockyer noted, “White River High is actually living out its mission statement, ‘ensuring high levels of learning for all students preparing them for successes beyond high school.’”

“Mike moved the meter ahead at White River,” agreed Bob Mc Mullen, AWSP’s Director of High School Programs. “He changed the behavior of the adults in the school in order to see progress with the students. He completely changed the way instructional leadership functions at White River. Positive change like this doesn’t just happen, it’s intentional.”

Before coming to White River, Hagadone was assistant principal at Puyallup High School. Before that, he was a PE teacher and head football coach at Enumclaw High School. Prior to that, he taught PE and social studies in addition to head football coaching responsibilities at both Sumner High School and Sandpoint High School in Sandpoint, Idaho. Hagadone earned both his bachelor of science in education and his master of education in secondary administration from the University of Idaho.

Hagadone was honored March 9 at a White River School District Board meeting. In October, he will be honored with the state elementary and middle level and principals of the year at AWSP’s annual principals’ conference.

Honored at the National Level

Hagadone now becomes eligible for the 2011 National Principals of the Year award. The program, sponsored by MetLife and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, annually recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals. From the state winners, six finalists (three middle level, three high school) will compete for the award in Washington, D.C., later this year. For more information, visit www.nassp.org.

About the Association of Washington School Principals

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 drawn from three grade-specific boards representing the elementary, middle and high school levels. For more information, visit www.awsp.org.

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