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**Bremerton Home to High School Principal of the Year**  
*Aaron Leavell brings staff, students and parents together for success*

OLYMPIA—March 4, 2009— Bremerton High School Principal Aaron Leavell has been named Washington state's 2009 High School Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). Linda Jenkins, assistant superintendent of Bremerton School District, and Bob Mc Mullen, director of high school programs at AWSP, surprised Leavell with the news at a school staff meeting this afternoon.

Leavell, currently in his fourth year as principal, believes school culture is “the bedrock for a stronger academic environment.” Driven by this belief, he has partnered with staff to usher in positive change throughout Bremerton High. With the support of administrators and parents, Leavell introduced a dress code for staff and students; the school board has since adopted the code district-wide. He also worked closely with community groups and police departments to tackle the issue of gang activity and its impact on students. To build school culture, Leavell helped staff implement Positive Behavior Supports, a program promoting shared values, clear expectations for learning and behavior, and a caring social climate.

Dr. Bette Hyde, superintendent of Bremerton School District, said Leavell embodies the spirit of the award. “Aaron lives and breathes high quality leadership and exemplifies what a strong instructional leader should be,” she said.

“Aaron’s talent for building community clearly has made a difference at Bremerton High School,” said McMullen. “As a principal, he leads by example. His passion, vision and commitment help staff and students believe in their ability to succeed.”

Leavell acknowledges the power of the partnerships he has forged over the past four years. He explains, “I am proud to be the leader of such a courageous group of students and educators, ones who have embraced education reform, and are willing to take risks.”

Every decision he makes, says Leavell, “has students at the center of it.” This includes Leavell’s decision to implement a professional learning community (PLC) within Bremerton High School. Under Leavell’s guidance, all instructional leaders in the school actively engage in PLC activities, visiting each other’s classrooms and meeting weekly to increase student achievement. The school also has moved to standards-based grading and homework practices.

Leavell’s dedication to student achievement touches young people who otherwise may have given up on their education. He has established several programs to provide individualized learning, including a full-time online academy for students struggling with credit recovery, a center for students who have children or hold jobs during the school day, and a program for students with severe behavioral problems. With Leavell at the helm, Bremerton High has doubled its Advanced Placement offerings, opening AP courses to all students.

Prior to becoming principal of Bremerton High, Leavell served as the administrator of Bremerton's Freshman Academy. According to Jenkins, Leavell was a pivotal figure in the development and implementation of the Academy, which created a smaller, more focused environment for freshmen. With the Academy program in place, the district reduced credit deficiency by half in the first year and reduced discipline rates by half the second year.

Leavell was selected as the state's High School Principal of the Year from 11 regional finalists by a panel of principals who serve on the Association's high school board. Candidates, both at the state and national level, are evaluated based on the following criteria:

**Collaborative Leadership:** Involves teachers, staff members, parents, students and the community in achieving the goals of the school; provides direction or focus to achieve the school's goals as a member of the school's leadership team; models continuous professional growth; balances management tasks with instructional leadership tasks.

**Personalization:** Establishes and maintains a positive school climate that reflects high student and staff morale; interacts professionally and tactfully with others; creates structures that enable teachers to develop an appreciation for each student's abilities; acknowledges achievement or accomplishments of students and teachers; models values, beliefs and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance; develops and maintains dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups.

**Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment:** Improves teaching and learning by implementing programs and improvement efforts; observes, supervises and evaluates teachers and instructional programs to maximize the learning opportunities for every student; analyzes multiple sources of data to improve instructional practices and outcomes; demonstrates knowledge of learning, teaching, research and programs that maximize student performance.

Leavell's nomination puts him in the running for the 2009 National High School Principal of the Year, a program sponsored by MetLife and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Launched in 1993, the MetLife/NASSP Principal of the Year program annually recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals. It has become a nationally known vehicle for honoring secondary school principals who have demonstrated extraordinary leadership, commitment to students and staff, service to their communities and contributions to the overall profession of educational leadership.

Each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Department of State's Overseas Schools send one high school and one middle level principal to the national level to compete for the 2009 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).

Leavell will be honored with the elementary and middle school principals of the year at AWSP's 2009 Principals' Conference Oct. 18-20 in Yakima. He also will travel to Washington, D.C., to represent Washington state at an awards banquet hosted by NASSP and MetLife.

***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).*

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