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## **Everson is Home to State's Top Elementary Principal**

*Marion Evenson honored for commitment to students and colleagues*

**OLYMPIA**—April 24, 2006—Nooksack Elementary is a school that has grown accustomed to recognition thanks to its significant improvements in student achievement. Principal Marion Evenson, though, is still adjusting.

Today, Evenson was named Washington state's 2006 Distinguished Principal by the Association of Washington School Principals and its elementary component board, the Elementary School Principals of Washington (ESPAW).

"This recognition needs to be shared with a wonderful staff and community, said Evenson. "We have worked to build a successful school community and everyone shares a sense of pride."

Nestled in the small northern Washington border town of Everson, Nooksack Elementary is a rural K-5 school where nearly half of its students qualify for free-and-reduced-price meals. Another 16.5 percent of its students require special education services and 11 percent are considered transitional bilingual. Yet the school has seen steady increases in its fourth-grade WASL test scores.

In 2004, Seattle Pacific University's School Research Center selected the school as one of examples of statewide academic success in spite of its seemingly challenging characteristics. Increased interest in Nooksack's achievements resulted in visitation requests from other schools, which led to the creation of a *Visiting School Protocol*, designed to provide a valuable experience for the visiting teachers and a learning experience for Nooksack staff, while maintaining a learning environment for students. Then in 2005, the school garnered the prestigious Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education.

"Marion has been instrumental in re-energizing this school, and it is reflected in every student and staff member at this school," said Gary Kipp, AWSP executive director. "It's clear that while she is very focused on student improvement, Marion has attended to many other aspects that make a school successful—things like a collaborative work environment, strong relationships with students and their families, not to mention a great partnership with the surrounding community," he said. "This is a great success story for everyone involved."

Administrators in Nooksack believe Evenson's focus on high expectations for students and staff instigated a change in the culture at her school. Under her leadership, test scores have steadily risen in reading, writing, math and science. Since the 2002-03 school year, reading scores increased from 82.5 percent to 94.3 percent and math went from 71.9 percent to 87.9 percent.

"I can't imagine a finer principal in the state of Washington than Marion Evenson," said Nooksack Valley superintendent Mark Johnson. "We are blessed to have her here serving the students and community of Nooksack Valley. This award is a tribute to the staff, students and parents of Nooksack Elementary School."

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In addition to academic successes, Evenson and her staff have instituted several programs and activities designed to enhance parent participation and student motivation. These include weekly parent newsletters, family literacy events with translation services and the loaning of refurbished computers to eligible families. Evenson credits her students' success to their hard work and the hard work and determination of Nooksack staff.

"High expectations are translated to students as no excuses—you can succeed, even though you've never done anything this hard before," said Evenson. "Everyone at our school, including office staff, cooks, custodians and teaching staff must be committed to mentoring and supporting the academic and social development of all students."

Evenson, who had worked in education for 40 years, got her start in Montana as a teacher before earning her first principal position in 1986. During an eight-year hiatus from the principalship, she wore many hats in Montana's Helena Public Schools, where she served in various central office administrative positions for three years. She has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Montana's Bemidji State University, a Master of Science in Education from the University of Montana and she earned her administrative certificate from Montana State University.

"It has been said that you can measure great principals by the number of leaders they leave behind when they are gone. If this is true, then the day Marion leaves the educational profession will be the day we say goodbye to one of the nation's best," said Joni Heutink, a teacher at Nooksack Elementary.

The National Distinguished Principals Program is sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and AIG VALIC. The formal award ceremony for all state nominees takes place in Washington D.C. each fall. Nominees participate in a series of events and activities over the course of two days, culminating in a formal awards banquet. AWSP and ESPAW will formally honor Evenson and the regional winners this October at the Principals' Conference in Vancouver.

For more information on the National Distinguished Principal program, visit the Web at: [www.naesp.org/ndp.htm](http://www.naesp.org/ndp.htm).

For more information on Nooksack Elementary School, visit their Web site: [http://www.nv.k12.wa.us/ne/ne\\_info.htm](http://www.nv.k12.wa.us/ne/ne_info.htm)

### **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](http://www.awsp.org).*