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Nooksack Valley Administrator Awarded ‘Assistant Principal of the Year’
Dale Stopperan driven by high expectations for learning

OLYMPIA—Oct. 7, 2009—For Dale Stopperan, assistant principal of Nooksack Valley Middle School (Nooksack Valley School District), stepping into the spotlight might take some getting used to. After all, the newly named 2010 Washington State Assistant Principal of the Year says he would rather be a rock-like leader than a rock-star celebrity.

Stopperan has been selected for the state’s 2010 Assistant Principal of the Year award by the Association of Middle Level Principals, a component board of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). Assistant principals at the middle and high school level alternate nominating duties for this honor each year.

Upon learning of the award, Stopperan, who is credited with creating a school culture of high expectations, said, “My aspiration has never been to be a ‘rock star,’ but rather to be a ‘rock’ by providing continuous support, guidance and leadership. I have persistently tried to be someone students, teachers and parents can trust and depend on to ensure our school is not only a safe and positive environment, but a place where teaching and learning is the norm of every classroom, every day.”

At Nooksack Valley Middle School, where 50 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch, Stopperan’s goal is to build a rigorous academic foundation for all students and provide them the opportunity to succeed.

In working toward that goal, Stopperan has made teacher collaboration come alive at the school, particularly in the area of math. Cultivating a focused team of math teachers, Stopperan has led the effort to implement a common math instructional model throughout the school. In addition to joining forces to align units, plan lessons and design assessments, the team has also piloted pre-teaching with small groups—an effort that has resulted in increased student understanding and confidence for mathematical learning.

Under Stopperan’s leadership, Nooksack Valley Middle School has also developed a highly successful academy program. Through the academy classes, students who are not meeting standard receive pre-teaching math lessons, while students performing above standard receive additional support in reading, writing or enrichment.

The results speak for themselves: Between 2005 and 2007, the number of seventh graders passing the math WASL jumped from 49.3 percent to 74.1 percent. Seventh grade reading and

writing WASL scores improved 15 percent in three years. In 2008, the school received the “School of Distinction” award from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

With a knack for building relationships and engaging the community, Stopperan has helped create a school climate of respect where students thrive. “I wish for each of our students to have a life of value and purpose,” says Stopperan.

“This is a very well-deserved recognition and we are very proud of Dale and his leadership,” stated Mark Johnson, superintendent of Nooksack School District. “He is a shining example of one of our many amazing staff members doing great things for our students and community.”

“Teacher collaboration is a much talked-about topic in the education community, but it takes remarkable leadership to actually make it happen,” said Gary Kipp, executive director of AWSP. “Dale’s ability to inspire, design and implement truly effective collaborative efforts within the Nooksack Valley Middle School community is paying off for students and families. He represents the positive impact that great leadership can have on student achievement.”

Stopperan will represent Washington state in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) State and National Assistant Principal of the Year Program, which annually honors a single winner from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity schools. NASSP and Virco, Inc. honor all State Assistant Principals of the Year at an awards banquet in Washington, D.C. and award the 2010 National Assistant Principal of the Year a \$5,000 grant.

Stopperan holds a Bachelor of Arts from Luther College and a Master of Education from City University. He has worked in the field of education for 27 years, seven of those in the role of assistant principal.

Stopperan will be honored at AWSP’s Assistant Principal of the Year Luncheon on Feb. 4, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue. The luncheon is held each year in conjunction with AWSP’s [Assistant Principals’ Leadership Conference](#).

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.

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