OLYMPIA–Feb. 2, 2009—The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP) has selected Christine J. Lynch, principal of Shaw Middle School, Spokane Public Schools, as the state’s Middle Level Principal of the Year.

“Students are at the center of all that we do as a building team,” explains Lynch, who has served as principal of Shaw Middle School for six years. During that time, she has rallied the school community to take collective responsibility for its students’ success. Supported by this spirit of partnership, Lynch is committed to making her motto—powerful instruction for all students—a reality. She is known throughout the school for bringing passion and purpose to her job as principal, which, she says, is “the best job in the world.”

“Chris has created a shared sense among students, parents and staff that all Shaw students can achieve at high levels and excel in school and beyond,” says Lorna L. Spear, Ed.D., executive director of teaching and learning for Spokane Public Schools. Strategies to increase student and parent engagement, such as having families participate in student-led conferences twice a year, are paying off. In 2006, the middle school was named a National Title I Distinguished School for closing the achievement gap in math. Last year, the school received a Title I Improvement Award from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for maintaining AYP in all categories. In the categories of special education, ELL, low income and students of color, Shaw is a leader in the Spokane district.

“She is a courageous leader when it comes to doing the right things for her students,” explains Spear. “Chris’s careful planning for implementation focuses teachers on collaborating to improve student learning.”

The cornerstone of Lynch’s leadership style is her strong belief in building the leadership capacity of others around her. Making professional development a priority for her staff, she welcomes the opportunity to serve as coach and mentor, particularly in the area of instructional practices. Lynch invites teachers to move into administration, and she champions teaching staff in their pursuit of national board and professional certification. She empowers her staff to take on more leadership roles, but at the same time respects and emphasizes the need for balance in their lives. “I could never do this work alone,” says Lynch.

Lynch’s credentials include a Master of Education, Bachelor of Arts in Education and administrative certificate from Eastern Washington University.
Lynch was selected from six regional finalists as the state’s 2009 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:

**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.

Lynch will be honored with the elementary and high school principals of the year at AWSP’s 2009 Principals’ Conference Oct. 18–20 in Spokane. She also will travel to Washington, D.C., to represent Washington state at the national level. There, she will be recognized with other state principals of the year at an awards banquet hosted by NASSP and MetLife. Each state, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Department of State’s Overseas Schools send one middle level and one high school 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.

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**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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