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West Valley Educator 2004 Assistant Principal of the Year
Centennial Middle School's Mike Lollar honored as ‘exceptional’ leader

SEATAC – As an assistant principal, Centennial Middle School's Mike Lollar has worn many hats, from curriculum leader to program director and staff mentor. Now he can add “award winner” to the list as the 2004 Assistant Principal of the Year. Lollar was honored today by the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals (AWMLP) at the 2004 Assistant Principal of the Year Conference in SeaTac. AWMLP is the middle school component of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP).

“The students and staff at Centennial Middle School are fortunate to have someone like Mike Lollar on their team,” said Gary Kipp, AWSP executive director. “Mike's passion for creating a positive school climate has made a deep and substantial impact on the learning that takes place at his school. Mike has also made a personal commitment to help other teachers and administrators in their quest to be better professionals,” he added. “We are honored to count Mike among our school leaders here in Washington state, and to have him represent us at the national level.”

Lollar has served as assistant principal at Centennial Middle School since 1998. Before transitioning into school administration, Lollar taught science at Kulshan Middle School for Bellingham Public Schools and biology at New Century High School for North Thurston Public Schools. Lollar holds a B.S. in biology from George Fox University in Oregon and a master’s in education and school administration from Western Washington University in Bellingham.

Centennial Middle School Principal Gene Sementi says Lollar has personally assumed responsibility for creating and maintaining a positive school climate. At Centennial, as in other schools across the state, this requires a serious examination of student discipline problems. One of Lollar’s solutions has been to create “Safe By Design,” a team of students – some with discipline issues, some without – who review school-wide disciplinary data, and offer their insights on recurring problems. As a result, the frequency of student discipline issues has declined, particularly among those students involved directly in the Safe By Design Team.
“Centennial, thanks to Mike’s vision and leadership, has gained a reputation in our community for being an extremely safe and nurturing educational environment – an environment that ensures every student has the opportunity to excel in a safe and non-threatening setting,” said Sementi. “I have grown to have complete and utter confidence in Mike's judgment and leadership, his opinion carries a huge amount of weight at Centennial and in the West Valley community.

“Mike, as is the case with many exceptional leaders, places as much emphasis on ‘follow-ship’ as leadership, and when striving to attain a goal is effective in either role, he is a consummate team leader and player,” Sementi said.

Each year, members of the Association of Washington School Principals take time to honor their fellow colleagues through the Assistant Principal of the Year Award. The award alternates each year between middle school level and high school level leaders. The winner is selected through a regional nomination process.

Steve Smith, president of the middle level board, said Lollar has impressed him in many ways. In particular, Smith appreciates Lollar’s ability to use data to help staff make informed decisions about student achievement.

“The use of data continues to be one of the most critical – but difficult – elements of improving student achievement. Mike has done a remarkable job breaking down the data for his school and making it relevant to the day-to-day work in classrooms,” said Smith, principal of West Valley Junior High in Yakima. “It might be achievement data for the formulation of academic intervention classes, or discipline data used with his Safe by Design team to be proactive in safety issues at Centennial. What [Mike] is doing allows for a concrete base from which he can hold relevant discussions with staff, parents, and community about the school. That’s essential to helping everyone understand and contribute toward improved student achievement.”

Lollar now goes on to represent Washington state in the 2004 McDonald’s/National Association of Secondary School Principals National Assistant Principal of the Year award program. In addition to an honorary plaque from AWSP, McDonald’s will also honor Lollar locally with a $1,000 award and a plaque as the Washington state winner.

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About 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 3,300 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 http://www.awsp.org.