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March 11, 2013

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Heather Renner Named Washington State 2013 Middle Level Principal of the Year

Morris E. Ford Middle Leader Brings Excellence to Franklin Pierce Schools

OLYMPIA—**Heather Renner**, principal at Morris E. Ford Middle School, was named this year's Washington State Middle Level Principal of the Year by a panel of principals representing the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals, a component of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). She was one of five finalists chosen from a field of 10 statewide nominees.

The other grade-level Washington State Principal of the Year honorees are:

- Elementary: **Kelly Aramaki**, Beacon Hill International School, Seattle Public Schools
- High School: **Brent Kline**, Mariner High School, Mukilteo School District

AWSP will honor the three principals of the year at the joint Washington Educators Conference in Seattle this October. Meanwhile, all three winners advance to their respective grade-level national competitions/celebrations.

Renner began her career at Ford Middle as a teacher in 2001. She was promoted to dean of students in 2004 and to assistant principal in 2006. She has been in the role of principal since 2010. She is generally known for taking a solidly good school into the "great" category. Under her leadership, the school has risen the past three years in the State Board of Education Achievement Index from "good" to "very good" to its current "exemplary" rating.

Her dedication to rigorous and collaborative instruction has resulted in a school with 60 percent of students on free and reduced lunch and a majority minority achieving above the state average on all subjects and at all grades. She has increased access to technology for all students in all subjects, has established 11 robust Professional Learning Communities that meet daily, and makes sure that there are ample professional development opportunities for staff.

Ford also maintains an active Response to Intervention team that meets weekly to identify tier two and three students who struggle with issues of achievement, attendance, behavior and social/emotional health issues. Renner's efforts with RTI have helped Ford reduce by a third the number of students who are absent from school a significant number of days and reduced the number of suspensions by 30 percent. Renner is fiercely committed to the community. The school hosts a monthly family night and maintains close relationships with the families of the 900 students at the school. In addition, Renner oversaw a five-year federal grant that offered organized after-school activities, meals and academic support. When that grant expired last summer, she sought local funding and has put in place a successful program through the Pierce County YMCA three days a week that offers many of the same services.

"Heather has clearly established herself as an effective leader of a strong staff at Ford Middle," said Don Rash, AWSP's Director of Middle Level Programs. "Heather has made impressive strides in student achievement, particularly significant in the area of math. She has the full backing of her staff, students and parents."

Said Franklin Pierce Superintendent Frank Hewins, "Despite the challenges of serving a high-poverty community with multiple languages other than English, Principal Renner's work with Ford Middle School's highly effective staff has taken an already high-achieving school to greater heights."

Renner earned a master of education from City University and a bachelor of arts in education from Western Washington University. She has her principal credentials from the University of Washington-Tacoma.

National Principal of the Year Program

Renner now becomes eligible for the 2013 National Principals of the Year award. The program, sponsored by MetLife and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, annually recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals. From the state winners, six finalists (three middle level, three high school) will compete for the award in Washington, D.C., later this year. For more information, visit www.nassp.org.

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