

# Remarkable Leadership



**ELEMENTARY**  
**GINA NACCARATO-KEELE**  
Linwood Elementary, Spokane PS



**MIDDLE LEVEL**  
**MARC GALLAWAY**  
Selah Middle School, Selah SD

**HIGH SCHOOL**  
**JOHN GUMMEL**  
Kelso High School, Kelso SD



**ASSISTANT**  
**TAMI SKILLINGSTAD**  
Westwood Middle School, Cheney PS



**W**ashington state has some pretty remarkable school leaders. And each year, AWSP is excited to honor four of those administrators with the designation of "Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year."

These awards start with your suggestions – nominations from AWSP members ([www.awsp.org/poy](http://www.awsp.org/poy)) about exemplary elementary, middle, and high school principals

and assistant principals. These names are then reviewed by our component boards, who have the tough task of narrowing the list of outstanding administrators down to the lucky winners.

In addition to our surprise celebrations at their schools, we are excited to profile each of them in Washington Principal and give you a glimpse into their schools and communities. We think you'll agree that each of them is deserving of the honor. ■

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# 2018 WASHINGTON STATE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

## GINA NACCARATO-KEELE

Linwood Elementary, Spokane PS

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Managing Resources, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*



### “We hit the jackpot.”

Staff and students at Linwood Elementary in Spokane always knew their principal was pretty special. But now they’ve got the title – and the honorary plaque – to prove it. Principal Gina Naccarato-Keele, the state’s 2018 Elementary Principal of the Year, appreciates the honor and chalks it all up to the relationships she has worked to develop in her 11 years at the school.

With more than 70 percent of her students receiving free- or reduced-price meals, Naccarato-Keele reached out to a local food bank and Gonzaga University’s business school to provide weekend food bags.

“Linwood students are outperforming schools with similar demographics 72 percent of the time in language arts and 67 percent of the time in mathematics.”

Over time, Naccarato-Keele has also implemented a handful of systems to help struggling students, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices. These two programs have been effective at helping her and her staff provide differentiated support. The school also focuses on a character-building program to improve social and emotional skills.

All of these efforts are paying off: Linwood students are outperforming schools with similar demographics 72 percent of the time in language arts and 67 percent of the time in mathematics.

A Spokane Valley native and the daughter of teachers, Naccarato-Keele taught in the Spokane area after graduating with her Masters of Education from Eastern Washington

University. She previously served as assistant principal at Regal Elementary before taking the helm at Linwood. She says it was other principals who encouraged her to pursue her principalship credentials in the first place.

“They told me to step up, that what I was doing in a class, I could do for 500 kids,” she told the Spokesman-Review.

Rickey, a Linwood fourth-grader, told Spokane’s KXLY TV he wasn’t surprised his principal won the award.

“My friends have said their principals are so nice and do all these things for them,” he said, “and I’m like, ‘Mrs. Naccarato does that times a million.’” ■



# 2018 WASHINGTON STATE MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

## MARC GALLAWAY

Selah Middle School, Selah SD

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Managing Resources, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*



**For Marc Gallaway, creating a successful school culture means focusing on students, their families and interests, not test scores.**

At Selah Middle, Gallaway has worked to deepen relationships – with staff, students and families. This has built trust and allowed them to have deeper conversations that lead to increased student success. What’s more, Gallaway has actively worked to lead by example at his school and not micromanage his team.

His workload has increased, but so has staff engagement — and student achievement.

Gallaway has served the Selah School District for 21 years, 15 as an administrator. He has served as principal of Selah Middle School/ Selah Junior High for 13 of those years. He is a graduate of Central Washington University.



“I’ve had the privilege of working with [Gallaway] for almost 17 years and have seen the difference he makes in the lives of kids. The positive culture at Selah Middle School is a reflection of the leadership Marc provides,” said Selah Superintendent Shane Backlund. “We are thrilled for Marc and he is very deserving of this honor.” ■

“ The positive culture at Selah Middle School is a reflection of the leadership Marc provides.”

# 2018 WASHINGTON STATE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

## JOHN GUMMEL

Kelso High School, Kelso SD

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Managing Resources, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*



### Good leaders — like John Gummel — are hot commodities in the K-12 world.

Perhaps that's why, a month after being named the Washington State High School Principal of the Year, Gummel announced he was stepping down from the principalship at Kelso High to assume new duties, this time as superintendent of the Pioneer School District in Shelton.

The move brings him closer to his family, and presented an opportunity for him to build a new high school in his new district.

As with other Principal of the Year (POY) winners, Gummel received high praise from his peers, his staff and others for creating a climate for success and allowing his team to do good work. In remarks during the award ceremony, Kelso Superintendent Glenn Gelbrich praised Gummel's leadership.

"The one thing that I think you exemplified that other principals around the state could learn from your model is that you create space for leadership for others," said Gelbrich. "You have teachers who lead, you have an administrative team who leads and you have kids who lead. In our community our kids are known as leaders and as givers and that comes from a culture that's been developed here."

Gummel became Kelso High's vice principal in 2007 and in 2012, became the school's principal. Prior to that, he was an assistant principal and math teacher at Rainier Sr./Jr. High. He also taught in Arizona for 11 years. Gummel is a Navy veteran and a graduate of both Arizona State and Northern Arizona University.

“ In our community our kids are known as leaders and as givers and that comes from a culture that's been developed here.”

His new community in the Pioneer School District is eager for him to apply his same leadership skills in ways that will make their district stronger.

"The board saw his strength in building relationships with staff and community and increasing student achievement," wrote the Pioneer School Board in a release announcing his hiring. "We fully expect Mr. Gummel to bring that same dedication to Pioneer School District." ■





# TAMI SKILLINGSTAD

Westwood Middle School, Cheney PS

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**Highly intelligent. Caring. Loving. Dedicated. Passionate. These are the clear hallmarks of a leader, and just some of the reasons Westwood Middle’s Tami Skillingstad was selected as Assistant Principal of the Year.**

“Students are truly her first priority,” said Erica Burden, principal of Westwood Middle. “She loves building student leaders – building leadership in everyone. She’s also very innovative. Tami comes up with approaches and solutions that most people wouldn’t think of. She is also a true friend.”

Tami has been at Westwood Middle for five years as assistant principal and athletic director. But her path to school leadership was not a traditional one. As she noted in an

interview for Washington Principal magazine, it was a quick decision.

“[Cheney] planned to downsize the district office staff and use this money for staffing in buildings. I was the math and science coordinator at the district office and then assigned, after approval from the building principal, to be an assistant middle school principal and athletic director,” she said. “I was so excited and fortunate to work with a principal that I have the highest respect for and in a building with teachers that are professional, have high expectations and love kids.”

Skillingstad says schools today must provide numerous wrap-around services outside of reading, writing and math to all students. At Westwood, they offer nutrition, clothing, social and emotional support, health services, mental health services, counseling, restorative practices, discipline, extracurricular opportunities, and academics with intentional student-centered interventions and enrichments. Today’s principals, she



“ Tami comes up with approaches and solutions that most people wouldn’t think of.”

says, are managing and running a highly complex system.

But that doesn’t change her love for what she does.

“I love being with the students and having fun in my job every day.” ■