

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kelly Aramaki Named Washington State 2013 Elementary Principal of the Year

Aramaki's work at Seattle's Beacon Hill International School focuses on instruction and people

OLYMPIA—Beacon Hill International School Principal **Kelly Aramaki** was named this year's Washington State Elementary School Principal of the Year by a panel of principals representing the Elementary School Principals Association of Washington (ESPAW), a component of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). Aramaki was one of three finalists chosen from a field of 18 statewide nominees. He learned of the news at a surprise school assembly this morning.

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

- Middle Level: **Heather Renner**, Morris E. Ford Middle School, Franklin Pierce 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.

Aramaki has been principal at Beacon Hill since 2011. He presides over a Title 1 language-immersion international school that has more than 86 percent students of color and where more than 32 percent speak English as their second language. More than two-thirds of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch programs. Many families are new immigrants to the United States, coming from such countries as Vietnam, China, Laos, Mexico, Guatemala and Somalia.

Aramaki is highly praised for his dedication to instructional leadership. He strongly believes instructional leadership is key to the job of a principal and clears his calendar for instructional work first. He prioritizes walk-throughs, observations, teacher conferences, collaborative meetings with Professional Learning Communities, strategy meetings with his instructional leaders and professional development meetings with staff.

This often leaves day-to-day building management activities for before and after-school times, but Aramaki doesn't mind. He typically arrives two and a half hours before the kids do in the mornings, only checks email three times a day, and he works closely with his administrative and front office staff to divide the work so he can closely focus on instructional activities.

In addition, Aramaki is highly engaged in the school. He is present in the building as much as possible. He makes weekly calls to families that are translated into five languages. And, he's been known to break into song occasionally. "Singing to my staff is one small thing that I do to create a positive, collective identity," said Aramaki, who minored in music at the University of Washington. He said he believes school should be a place where teachers want to work and where they, "... experience joy, love, friendship, encouragement, support, shared passion, shared focus and shared mission."

Brianna Dusseault, former Executive Director of Schools for Seattle Public Schools, agrees. "Kelly has built powerful relationships with his parents, staff and community that have allowed him to leverage their gifts and skills to even better serve students," she wrote in her letter of recommendation. One of the many examples she included in her letter was his encouragement to develop a before-school literacy program

run by volunteer parents who were trained by staff in effective reading and coaching strategies. That program now serves 100 students each morning who need extra reading help.

“Kelly’s application leaped to the top of the pile,” said Katie Leid, ESPAW’s past president and chair of the elementary principal of the year review panel. “We were so impressed by his commitment to both the instructional and the personal aspects of the school.”

Aramaki began his career as a teacher between 1999 and 2002 at Newport Heights Elementary School in Bellevue, Wash. He then became principal at Maywood Hill Elementary School in Bothell, Wash., and served between 2003 and 2007. In 2007, he took the principalship at John Stanford International School in Seattle, leaving in 2011 to join the staff at Beacon Hill. Aramaki earned a master of teaching degree from the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York, and a bachelor of science degree in zoology from the University of Washington. He has his principal credentials through the UW’s Danforth Educational Leadership program. In 2010 he earned the prestigious Milken Family Foundation Award.

National Distinguished Principal of the Year Program

Aramaki will be honored this fall in Washington D.C. as part of the [National Distinguished Principal of the Year program](#), which is sponsored by the [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and VALIC. All state winners participate in a series of events and activities over the course of two days, culminating in a formal awards banquet. There is no national winner at the elementary level.

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