



ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Elementary Principal of the Year Award Goes to Grays Harbor Leader

Kathleen Werner won't let circumstances stand in the way of total student success

OLYMPIA – Kathleen Werner doesn't take no for an answer. And don't even think about coming up with an excuse. Werner, principal at Stevens Elementary in Aberdeen, runs a "no excuse" school. There are no limits to academic success – or to success in life for that matter – for the school's 500 students. Everyone can learn regardless of their circumstances.

Werner, the 2011 Washington State Elementary Principal of the Year, lives that philosophy every day. She has inspired an entire school culture around the concept of total success. Since taking the helm of Stevens in 2006, she has created an atmosphere of hope in an impoverished and embattled community where excuses don't have to be invented. They are a way of life.

By raising expectations and enlisting everyone in the fight from academics to custodians to parents, Werner and her team not only give kids the tools they need to get through school, they are helping them navigate the world outside school walls. Kids are taught that the quality of their life is based on their choices. They are responsible for their academic and personal futures. If they have issues, they take the lead on solving problems.

Success is coming at all levels. Werner reports that in her first year as principal she saw 200 student referrals for behavior at the end of September. After two years, she had that down to 2 referrals for behavior problems at the end of September. MSP scores consistently match or exceed state standards. Use of technology is up thanks to teacher-written grants and the establishment of tech resource rooms both for students and parents. Stevens boasts an "amazingly strong parent group" that, despite economic and home-life pressures, is actively involved in student life.

Werner was named this year's Elementary Principal of the Year by the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). A panel of principals representing the Elementary School Principals Association of Washington (ESPAW), a component of AWSP, selected Werner from three finalists out of a field of 18 statewide regional winners.

Jill Massa, President of ESPAW and principal at Warden Elementary in Warden, visited all three finalist schools with colleague Glenn Malone, principal at Wildwood Park Elementary in

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Component Groups of AWSP

Elementary School Principals Association of Washington
Association of Washington Middle Level Principals
Washington Association of Secondary School Principals

National Affiliates

National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Elementary Principal of the Year Honor

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Puyallup and last year's Elementary Principal of the Year. They talked with staff, students, parents and community members in making their decision.

"The people who spoke about Kathy made me cry. Three times. And I'm not a crier," recounted Massa. She described the visit to Stevens Elementary as "moving" and "life changing." She added, "I like to think I'm a pretty good principal, but I left there thinking, 'I've got to step up my game!'"

Werner's success has not gone unnoticed at the district level. Aberdeen's new superintendent, Tom Opstad, calls this award a tremendous honor and says it is a privilege to work with Werner. "The Stevens school community works hard as a team," he said. "I know they're all thrilled to share in Kathy's recognition." Opstad added that he's looking forward to, "working with Kathy and our district staff to provide the excellence and a commitment to public education that shines through at Stevens Elementary."

Before coming to Stevens, Werner was principal, intern principal and a teacher at Alexander Young Elementary School in Aberdeen. She also taught at Emerson Elementary in Hoquiam. Her credentials include a bachelor's in education from Washington State University, a master's in reading and literacy from Walden University, and she is working on a doctorate from Grand Canyon University.

Werner was honored today at a surprise school assembly. In October, she will be honored with the middle level and high school principals of the year at AWSP's annual principals' conference.

Honored at the National Level

The [Principal of the Year program](#) is sponsored by the [National Association of Elementary School Principals](#) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education and AIG VALIC. The formal award ceremony for all state nominees takes place in Washington D.C. each fall. Nominees participate in a series of events and activities over the course of two days, culminating in a formal awards banquet.

About the Association of Washington School Principals

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 drawn from three grade-specific boards representing the elementary, middle and high school levels. For more information, visit [**www.awsp.org**](http://www.awsp.org).

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