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Shorewood High School's Melyssa Stone is Presented with AWSP's 2026 Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year Award

Student Voice Rises at Shorewood High through Melyssa Stone's Leadership



OLYMPIA — Melyssa Stone, Assistant Principal at Shorewood High School in Shoreline, WA, has been named the 2026 Washington State Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year. She will also be honored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals for the National Assistant Principal of the Year program.

Stone is one of those heroes who doesn't want recognition, which makes her all the more deserving of it. By listening closely to students and rolling up her sleeves to take practical action, Stone has transformed Shorewood High School into a place of belonging, support, and self-advocacy.

One of the most pivotal actions Stone took through student voice centers on safety. She homed in on survey feedback from students about feelings of safety at school. Students expressed a need for both physical safety and systems to ensure social-emotional safety. In response, Stone worked with teachers to establish clear protocols for students on expectations for entering and exiting class to help keep hallways peaceful. Additionally, the team began their staff meetings with scenarios that warranted an appropriate level of response, which, in turn, helped strengthen their intervention muscles. These efforts sparked conversations about confronting their own blind spots as a team and about building collective awareness within the school community.

At the core of Stone's work is a belief that all students are capable. She writes, "I believe that all students want to succeed, and helping them identify barriers and working with my amazing team are at the crux of brainstorming." When asked how she challenges high-performing students while maintaining high expectations for all learners, Stone answered: "There are massive amounts of differentiation happening in classrooms on a daily basis, and my own research in highly capable learners makes clear that students are capable of rising to meet the challenges of learning, and it's our job as educators to recognize when other behaviors may be masking a need for more rigor."

A true partner to teachers and staff, Stone takes every opportunity to uplift her team and celebrate her students' accomplishments.

"She is a trusted figure in the community, among her peers and families. Melyssa is a cheerleader for things that uplift anyone and everyone. She is also an amazing Black leader in a district where students want to see themselves reflected in all spaces. Her joy, brilliance, and commitment to



Strong leaders, strong schools, strong students.

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supporting all students make her an amazing leader,” says Kelsey Linares, who nominated Melyssa Stone for the award.

Stone’s passion and experience extend beyond her school in many ways. She served on OSPI's Washington State African American History Advisory Board, working with Congress to develop a comprehensive education plan for secondary education. She served on the University of Washington's PESB board for more than five years as the AWSP rep, working across the College of Education to help maintain accreditation. She is also currently a member of the University of Washington's conference planning team for the Leading Towards Justice annual symposium, a conference for school leaders and communities to think creatively and across networks to work towards equitable outcomes for students and families.

Living by the idea that *“a rising tide lifts all boats,”* Stone’s work continues to elevate those around her—proving that when leaders lead with heart, entire communities flourish.