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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2023

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Announcing the 2024 Washington State Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year

These four leaders are moving the needle for kids every day.

OLYMPIA – The Association of Washington School Principals is pleased to announce the 2024 recipients of the Washington State Principal and Assistant Principal of the Year awards: Dr. William Jackson, Secondary Principal of the Year; Heidi Fagerness, Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year; Cathy Sork, Elementary Principal of the Year; and Dr. Nick Davies, Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year. These distinguished leaders epitomize excellence in educational leadership within the state, serving as exemplary leaders for their peers, students, and communities.

Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year

Dr. William Jackson, Nathan Hale High School, Seattle Public Schools



Dr. William Jackson, principal at Nathan Hale High School in Seattle Public Schools, was named the 2024 Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year. Jackson will also be recognized nationally by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). He will compete with winners from other states for the NASSP’s National Principal of the Year award.

Jackson has been a school leader for seven years and leads with his strong belief that “honoring the brilliance of [his] students by centering their voice in [the] curricular and school design is the justice-centered approach that leads to high engagement in learning, and strong academic outcomes.” It is clear he is highly respected in his school, district, and community as he received a record-breaking number of nominations from each. Nominations included phrases such as “transformational leadership”, “connector of people”, “loved and admired”, and “deserves to be recognized with this great honor.” His supervisor, Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools Dr. Brent Jones, affirmed Jackson “has a clear vision of how to systemically build climate for equity, justice, and academic outcomes” and that he leads with humbleness, intentionality, and steadfastness resulting in “bold outcomes.”

Dr. Jackson will be recognized and celebrated in Washington, D.C., next year.

Washington State Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year

Heidi Fagerness, Chehalis Middle School, Chehalis School District



Heidi Fagerness, assistant principal at Chehalis Middle School in the Chehalis School District, was named the 2024 Washington State Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year. Fagerness will also be recognized nationally by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), where she will compete with winners from other states for the NASSP’s National Assistant Principal of the Year award, announced in early April.

Fagerness has been in education for 32 years and is in her fifth year as assistant principal at Chehalis Middle School. She shows up every day with the “intention of serving others through [her] head, hands, and heart.” It

GRADE-LEVEL COMMITTEES

Elementary Grade Level Leadership Committee
Middle Level Grade Level Leadership Committee
High School Grade Level Leadership Committee

NATIONAL COMPONENTS

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

is clear Fagerness recognizes the great work she's doing is a team effort. In response to the award she stated, "It isn't just me, it's us. I really, truly believe that." Chehalis Middle School principal Chris Simpson, who nominated her, describes Fagerness as "highly effective in promoting and creating a positive culture at CMS." The cheers and hugs handed out at the surprise announcement with staff are a testament to that positive school culture.

In July, Fagerness will be honored at the National Principals Conference with winners from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity, and the U.S. Department of State Office of Overseas Schools.

Washington State Elementary Principal of the Year

Cathy Sork, Dorothy Fox Elementary School, Camas School District



Cathy Sork, principal at Dorothy Fox Elementary School in the Camas School District, was named the 2024 Washington State Elementary Principal of the Year. Sork will also be recognized nationally by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), with winners from other states as one of NAESPs National Distinguished Principals.

Sork has been principal for seventeen years at Dorothy Fox, with a total of twenty-four years in educational leadership. One of the best parts of her job is she gets "to have relationships with students and help them to grow, laugh, stretch, and move toward a bright future." Colleague and mentee of Sork's, Kristie Wall, believes she "embodies the best of our profession, modeling student-first leadership," and it is clear she is highly thought of by her staff as they gasped in awe as they heard she had won this award.

Next fall, Sork will be honored in Washington, D.C., as part of the National Distinguished Principal of the Year program, sponsored by NAESP in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education. 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.

Washington State Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year

Dr. Nick Davies, Ogden and Eisenhower Elementary Schools, Vancouver Public Schools



Dr. Nick Davies, assistant principal at both Ogden and Eisenhower Elementary Schools in Vancouver Public Schools, was named the 2024 Washington State Assistant Principal of the Year. In addition, he will represent Washington as our state's winner of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) National Outstanding Assistant Principal award. NAESP recognizes one winner from each state every year.

Dr. Davies has been an assistant principal for four years and shows up every day with the purpose of having "a positive impact on people's lives so that they can become the best they are capable of becoming", and he shares his educational leadership knowledge with others as a writer of widely published articles. A parent who nominated Dr. Davies described him as "an approachable and humble community leader by encouraging and engaging his staff and students to create a thriving environment for all." One nomination stated Davies is "the most respectful, humble, and hard-working school administrator we have ever interacted with."

In July, Dr. Davies will attend the NAESP 2024 UNITED Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, where he will be recognized for his achievement.

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