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1021 8th Ave. SE, Olympia, WA 98501 | www.awsp.org
360.357.7951 | 800.562.6100 | fax: 360.357.7966
facebook.com/awsp.principals | [@awsp_principals](https://twitter.com/awsp_principals)

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CONTACT:

David Morrill | david@awsp.org

David Cooke, Principal at Jemtegaard Middle School, is the 2020 Secondary Principal of the Year

Washougal School District principal leads at his school and beyond

OLYMPIA — Jemtegaard Middle School Principal David Cooke (Washougal School District) was named this year’s Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year by a team representing the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP).



Cooke is in his 15th year as principal with the last seven coming at Jemtegaard. In his time there, he’s led dramatic reductions in discipline incidents and big increases in student achievement. Through it all, Cooke focuses on creating a school culture valuing students and keeping them at the heart of the work. This approach has led to genuine student leadership and staff support for innovative teaching methods.

Many of Cooke’s programs have been implemented across the district. Jemtegaard frequently gets visits from principals across the state to look, listen, and learn about some of the amazing student support programs Cooke and his staff have implemented. Jemtegaard’s turnaround from a school failing to make progress under NCLB to a school receiving numerous awards, achievements, and recognitions are a direct result of his leadership and the hard work from the staff.

A champion for English Language Learners and students with special needs, Cooke has organized monthly meetings with Spanish-speaking families to help support students, parents, and the district. It is Cooke’s focus on students and his state-level leadership that make him a great choice for the Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year.

“Under David’s leadership, Jemtegaard Middle School has gone from a school that was failing to make progress under No Child Left Behind to one that has been State Recognized multiple times for academic performance increases and closing the achievement gap,” Superintendent Mary Templeton said. “Through this work, Washougal students are rising, and our district with them! I could not be happier for David receiving this great recognition! It is so well deserved.”

National Principal of the Year Program

Cooke will be recognized in Washington, D.C. in 2021 to be recognized for his accomplishment. The program, sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, annually recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals. For more information, visit www.nassp.org.

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