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Enumclaw Superintendent Named 2019 Washington State Superintendent of the Year

Michael Nelson increased engagement—and achievement—of Native students

SPOKANE—Michael Nelson, superintendent of Enumclaw School District, was named the 2019 Superintendent of the Year Friday by the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA). The announcement was made at WASA’s Superintendents Component meeting in Spokane. The award is designed to recognize the outstanding leadership of active, front-line superintendents and pay tribute to those who lead our public schools.

“During the past 11 years as superintendent, Mike has provided a clear vision for equity, excellence, and respect. He has fostered the creation of systems that ensure all students are learning and achieving. Mike’s unwavering commitment to a student-centered culture has yielded impressive results. He believes that relationships, high expectations, and a relentless pursuit of equity are the foundation for school and school district success,” said WASA Executive Director Joel Aune.

“Mike brings a humble and caring demeanor to the work, taking satisfaction in the excellence of the staff and the success of the students in the Enumclaw schools. He is an excellent example of our profession, and a great leader for public education,” Aune added. “We congratulate Mike on this well-deserved honor and thank him for the wonderful things he is doing for children and young people.”

Under Nelson’s leadership, the Enumclaw School District gave significant effort and made progress to rise above the statistics to close the gaps for their Native students. Enumclaw redesigned and expanded the role of their Cultural Support Program building relationships and partnerships with Native students and their families, to create a great foundation to build greater capacity and understanding of the Native students’ rich culture and history among all students, staff members, and community by infusing the value of equity in their system.

The shift to honor Native students’ culture, history, and story resulted in a significant change in their desire to attend and do well in school. In 2017 and 2018, 100 percent of Native students in the Cultural Program graduated from Enumclaw High School. Fifty percent of the students in the Native American Cultural Program went on to college in 2018—33 percent above the national average.

As the state's Superintendent of the Year, Nelson also will serve as a candidate for the 2019 American Association of School Administrators' National Superintendent of the Year Award. The national award will be announced in February at the AASA National Conference on Education in Los Angeles.

"It is pure joy to serve as superintendent in the cities of Enumclaw, Black Diamond, and many unincorporated communities that represent the 4,000 students in the Enumclaw School District," said Superintendent Michael Nelson. "The honor of being named 2019 Washington State Superintendent of the Year represents a collective, collaborative, and unified effort by so many and demonstrates the value for public education championed by our entire school district community! I am deeply grateful and honored."

The Enumclaw School District was organized in 1887 and has provided 131 years of educational opportunities for students living within the boundaries spanning 456 miles. The district has eight schools and employs more than 564 certificated and classified staff. Nelson first joined the district in 1999 as an assistant superintendent. Previously, he served as Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment and as a principal in Federal Way Public Schools; and as an assistant principal in the Sumner School District.

Nelson holds a Master of Arts in Education Administration and Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Pacific Lutheran University. He earned his superintendent certification from Seattle Pacific University.

In addition to his district responsibilities, Nelson serves on the boards for Books for Babies Program at St. Elizabeth Hospital (Founder) and Enumclaw Schools Foundation (Founding Board Member). Nelson has also served as the Enumclaw Rotary Foundation President, Enumclaw Rotary Club President, and the Enumclaw Chamber Board of Directors.

Washington's Superintendent of the Year is awarded a \$1,000 check from D.A. Davidson & Company to use toward a school or educational program of their choice. Past recipients of the WASA Superintendent of the Year Award include:

- 2018: Frank Hewins, Franklin Pierce SD
- 2017: Gary Cohn, Everett PS
- 2016: Steve Webb, Vancouver PS **National Superintendent of the Year Finalist**
- 2015: Dennis Kip Herren, Auburn SD
- 2014: Edward Vargas, Kent SD
- 2013: Sandra Hill, Pasco SD
- 2012: Patti Banks, University Place SD
- 2011: Mary Alice Heuschel, Renton SD **National Superintendent of the Year Finalist**
- 2010: Steve Chestnut, Selah SD
- 2009: Mark Johnson, Nooksack Valley SD
- 2008: Linda Byrnes, Arlington SD
- 2007: Larry Nyland, Marysville SD **National Superintendent of the Year Finalist**

About the Washington Association of School Administrators

The Washington Association of School Administrators (<http://www.wasa-oly.org>) is committed to the development of quality education through professional leadership. Members benefit from a supportive community of professional leaders working to provide insightful and valuable training, support, and resources to education leaders, and to sustain a positive impact on legislative and community leaders. With more than 1,500 members, membership is open to all education administrators in central office,

building management, and educational agency positions. A not-for-profit organization, WASA is funded by membership dues and association events.

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