



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASA Recognizes Outstanding Educational Leaders at the 2021 WASA/AWSP Summer Conference

*Washington state educators celebrate successes, focus on leadership, equity,
and opportunity for our state's students*

OLYMPIA— Nearly 600 school superintendents, central office administrators, and principals from across Washington state took part in virtual online workshops at the 41st annual Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) and Association of Washington School Principals' (AWSP) Summer Conference. The theme of this year's conference, "Junetastic," focused on three leadership themes: Instructional Practice, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for Staff and Students, and Equity.

Keynote speakers and breakout sessions addressed topics such as leadership development, equity, leading restorative practices, effective school mental health, and meeting the needs of all students. The event also played host to WASA's 2021 End of the Year Celebration, where WASA state-level awards, the Piper Sandler Doyle E. Winter Scholarship for Administrative Leadership in Education, and the PEMCO Robert J. Handy Most Effective Administrator awards were also presented.

"The WASA awards program highlights exemplary examples of leadership, trust, and advocacy

for students and for public education,” said WASA Executive Director Joel Aune. “For the past 15 months, school district leaders have been under intense pressure as the pandemic threw families, students, and schools into chaos. Their leadership, coupled with incredible instances of support from community leaders, kept the focus on students and their well-being,” he added.

“This year’s award recipients serve as a model for leadership and selfless service to the children and young people attending our schools,” he continued. “On behalf of WASA and school district leaders across the entire State of Washington, I congratulate this year’s award recipients. We are indebted to their extraordinary service, support, and leadership — for kids. During the most difficult of circumstances, they stepped up in a big way.”

Those receiving special honors for 2020–21 included:

WASA State Level Awards

- WASA Leadership Award: **Tim Merlino, Superintendent, Educational Service District 112**
- Service to WASA Award: **Dr. Sam Artzis, Health Officer, Northeast TriCounty Health District**
- D.A. Davidson Barbara Mertens Legacy Award: **Dr. Mike Starosky, Executive Director of Schools, Seattle Public Schools**
- Golden Gavel Award: **State Superintendent Chris Reykdal and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Team**

Piper Sandler Doyle E. Winter Scholarship for Administrative Leadership in Education

The 2021 Doyle E. Winter Scholarship for Administrative Leadership in Education was presented to **Cindy Rockholt, Assistant Superintendent Educator Growth and Development; Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).**

The Doyle E. Winter Scholarship is designed to assist talented and committed educational administrators as they enhance those skills needed to serve as educational leaders in the field of public education. The scholarship was established in honor of Dr. Doyle Winter, who retired in 2002 after completing 44 years of service for Washington public schools. Winter is a former executive director of WASA and has been recognized repeatedly for exhibiting exemplary leadership ability and enhancing school administration throughout his career.

PEMCO Robert J. Handy Most Effective Administrator Awards

The Robert J. Handy Most Effective Administrator Awards, sponsored by PEMCO Insurance and WASA, seek to recognize outstanding public-school administrators in the state of Washington. One highly effective superintendent, central office administrator, or building administrator is selected from a small school district (up to 500 students), medium-size school district (501–2,000 students), and large school district (over 2,000 students). A \$10,500 award is equally divided among the three winners. A peer committee selects the recipients from nominations that describe how each nominee is taking part in realizing the nine characteristics of high-performing schools/districts as defined by research from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

This year’s Robert J. Handy Most Effective Administrator Awards were presented to:

- Large District: **Dr. Wade Smith, Superintendent, Walla Walla School District**

- Medium-Size District: **Joseph Martin, Tribal Education Officer, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe**
- Small District: **Tim Dickinson, P-8 Principal, Conway School District**

About the Washington Association of School Administrators

The [Washington Association of School Administrators](#) 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 over 1,900 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.