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**Spanaway Middle School Principal Shannon Leatherwood is the 2023 Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year**

*Bethel School District principal is moving the needle on inclusion, collaboration, and test scores*

**OLYMPIA** – Shannon Leatherwood, principal at Spanaway Middle School in the Bethel School District, was named this year’s Washington State Secondary Principal of the Year. Leatherwood will also be recognized at the national level by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). She will compete with winners from other states for the NASSP National Principal of the Year award.



Leatherwood, in her 12<sup>th</sup> year as a principal and fifth at Spanaway Middle School, leads with two principles. First, she is driven by what is best for students. And secondly, she believes if something isn’t sustainable, it’s not worth doing.

A tireless advocate for students, Leatherwood leads by example and serves with her whole heart, creating a culture of inclusivity, support, and pride in students, staff, and community while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence. In her time at Spanaway Middle School, she has built a strong and collaborative leadership team, increased the school’s inclusionary practices, created better access to quality learning, improved school and student safety by growing restorative practices and strengthening support systems. This was all done by providing the right professional development for the school’s staff to grow their individual and collective efficacy.

Shannon believes in paying forward what she received as a leader and does so as the president of the Bethel Principal Association, mentoring fellow administrators, serving on district-level committees, and presenting at statewide conferences. She centers her greatest accomplishments around the themes of culture, systems, and learning and believes relationships form the core of culture. It’s those relationships that allowed her staff to embrace collective efficacy on three key messages about their belief in students: “What we’re doing here is important. We believe you can do this. We are not giving up on you.”

The results speak for themselves. In fact, only one of our state’s 541 middle schools saw more growth in their test scores than Spanaway Middle School. For all those reasons and more, Leatherwood is a deserving winner.

“We are so excited to see Shannon recognized as Secondary Principal of the Year for the state. Shannon is an amazing leader who has demonstrated the ability to truly be the learning leader of her school in a way that results in both improved school culture and increased student achievement,” said Brian Lowney, Ph.D., Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools in the Bethel School District. “Shannon is an outstanding representation of the fantastic principals, teachers, and staff who are dedicated to serving the students and families in Bethel.”

**National Principal of the Year Program**

In October 2023, NASSP selects a National Principal of the Year during National Principals Month. Leatherwood will be honored in September’s NASSP Principals Institute in Washington, D.C., with winners from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, and the Department of Defense Education Activity. One national winner is chosen from three finalists.

**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)