

THREE ARLINGTON SCHOOLS WIN “GREAT SCHOOLS” AWARD

ARLINGTON, WA - Kent Prairie Elementary, Post Middle and Stillaguamish Valley Schools are recognized as top 5% of highest improving schools over a five-year span in Reading and Math for the State of Washington. This is the second year in a row that Post Middle School has received this recognition. Kent Prairie, Post Middle and Stillaguamish Valley schools will be three of the one-hundred and four Washington State schools will be honored at an Awards Luncheon on September 26 as a part of the third Research Institute being held by PDK-Washington State. PDK-WA, in collaboration with the Center for Educational Effectiveness, will recognize 104 schools for sustained improvement in student achievement as measured by seven years of WASL test scores. All schools met the Schools of Distinction performance criteria for the 2008-09 school year. Along with recognizing the “Great Schools” 2009 Award winners, the luncheon and Institute will honor the 2008 and 2007 Schools of Distinction award winners for sustained academic achievement of students in their schools. CEE representative, John McCullough, will officially present the awards at the Arlington School Board of Directors meeting on October 26, 2009 at 7pm.

“We are very excited for this remarkable progress in student achievement made through hard work and focused efforts in your school and in schools across the state of Washington.” Sue Mills, Executive Director, Center for Educational Effectiveness, Inc.

The schools identified in this analysis represent exceptional improvement in combined Reading and Math as demonstrated by the students they have served over the 2003 – 2009 timeframe. ASD is especially proud that Post Middle School has received the award for two consecutive years.

Superintendent Kris McDuffy stated, “We are extremely proud of the gains being made in these schools and the incredible dedication, hard work and passion of our staff focused on success for ALL students! We will continue to build upon this great success.”

Background

In July 2007, The Center for Educational Effectiveness (CEE) was contracted to provide independent, third party expertise in a collaborative project with OSPI leadership on the design and analysis of a process to recognize schools demonstrating exceptional improvement in Reading and Math performance. For 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, this recognition was known as the “State Superintendent’s Schools of Distinction– Learning Improvement Awards”. CEE also provided assistance in the validation of data used in this award. CEE’s expertise has evolved over 9 years, through partnerships with over 550 schools and over 110 districts in Washington on the formative use of data to drive school and district improvement.

For 2009, sponsorship for this school-level, learning improvement award, now known as the “Great Schools Award” is through the Washington Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa International (PDK-WA) and the Center for Educational Effectiveness.

Design Objectives

The design objectives for this recognition remain the same in 2009 as used in 2007 and 2008 and are centered on several factors that were integral for measuring improvement:

- Recognizing that schools have a variety of challenges, opportunities and radically different starting points in terms of student performance-- the intention was to recognize growth across the spectrum of performance-- not simply getting students to “meeting standard”.
- Recognize improvement over at least a 5 year period of time.
- Develop a methodology that combines the two foundational skills— literacy and numeracy (Reading and Math) in order to identify and recognize growth in both areas
- Create a model which adds value for stakeholders— as additional information, not a replacement for AYP determination.
- Use publicly available data to ensure transparency and openness
- Meaningful: recognize a small number of schools who have demonstrated exceptional improvement in a Reading and Math Learning Index. All award winners must have at least “adequate performance” in both Reading and Math.

Defining a way to view Improvement

NCLB and the AYP calculations use year-to-year results for the “percentage of students meeting standard” and “safe harbor”. Since 2004, CEE has used an alternative model based on the Reading and Math Level Indices (RLI and MLI). The RLI and MLI definition dates back to Washington’s Commission on Student Learning and the A+ Commission. Used to determine growth targets before NCLB, the strength of these indices is that they represent the performance of “all students” in the building, not simply those “meeting standard”.