



2011 STATE RECOGNITION AWARDS

'Educating the Whole Child' Award

For promoting promising practices to ensure ALL students are safe, healthy, engaged, supported and challenged

Nancy Larsen

Special Services Director
Warden School District

Throughout Nancy Larsen's accomplished career, which includes 18 years as a special education teacher and 20 years as the Special Services Director, all in Warden School District – she has consistently maintained a keen focus on the learning, social and emotional needs of *each* child she serves.

Ms. Larsen directs and coordinates all the educational and support services for students in Warden. With most of the children living poverty, Nancy works with teachers and educational assistants to provide structures where children feel that they learn without worries. She has always understood that children must have their mental and physical needs in order to learn. Warden is the most southern town in Grant County, and at times struggles to get county services for its parents and children. Nancy is a leader in coordinating and bringing county services into Warden. If specialty services are needed, Nancy takes children anywhere in the state to find help. Dr. Mike Villarreal, assistant superintendent in Othello, recalls Nancy working with a child who moved into Warden who was deaf and had a right leg prosthesis. Over several months Nancy arranged for intense services and tenaciously worked to get him into to the State School for the Deaf in Vancouver. Not only did she help in getting him enrolled, but also provided the family with transportation and housing and connected them to their local church. The student became successful because of Nancy's recognition of meeting the child's health needs.

Nancy advocates for children by strategically making sure that all local, state and federal resources touch every child in the district. In her leadership role, Nancy ensures that children in Warden have opportunities to reach their potential through targeted academic programs. Nancy currently is supervising a readiness program for young children from ages 0-5, which targets parents and children and provides them with literacy activities that prepare them to enter the K-12 system.

Nancy is consistently looking for ways to support the children she serves, as evidenced by the number of children that have received continued support in the special education program. Many of the children continue to be served until they reach 21 years old. Usually, by this time Nancy has been able to secure ongoing adult support services for those who need it.

Ms. Larsen_ believes that children who receive the very best opportunities can achieve their potential. Dr. Villarreal recalls a student who entered the middle school with severe physical and mental disabilities. Nancy made sure that this young lady found a prescriptive educational program that pushed her capabilities, helping her to gain enough confidence and skills that she actually won the middle school spelling bee her 8th grade year.

Nancy Larsen is truly is one of the great hidden educational leaders in the state of Washington. She continues to create a legacy of student achievement, and more importantly, exemplifies a leader who has educated the Whole Child for 38 years in the Columbia Basin.