

Pre-Conference | Wednesday, October 15, 2025 | 1:00 to 4:00

Beyond Access: Creating Classrooms Where Every Learner Belongs

Speaker: Carol Kinch, Director of Student Services, Tigard-Tualatin SD

Inclusion isn't something we add on after the lesson plan—it's the way we design the lesson from the start. It's more than a seat in the room—it's the opportunity to participate fully, connect meaningfully, and thrive as part of the classroom community. This interactive session explores how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can remove barriers before they arise, ensuring that all students—regardless of ability, background, or identity—can access and engage in rich learning experiences. Through real-world examples, collaborative reflection, and hands-on activities, participants will discover practical strategies for lesson design, flexible instruction, and community-building. You'll leave with ready-to-use tools, fresh inspiration, and the confidence to design classrooms where, when we plan for those at the margins, everyone benefits.

Embracing Inclusion: An Equitable Approach to the Continuum of Services

Speaker: Sabrina Alexander, Assistant Director Academic Programs, Portland SD

This presentation will explore the development of a district-wide continuum of services based on inclusive practices to support all students, drawing on a systematic process for considering specialized programming. We will examine the steps involved, from building-level professional meetings and district engagement to IEP and placement meetings, ensuring equitable consideration of student needs. Aligning with COSA's Equity & Anti-Racist Stance, this session emphasizes a process that prioritizes discussion of current needs and universal supports within the neighborhood school, ensuring that decisions regarding more specialized placements are made thoughtfully and without predetermination, thereby cultivating every student's unique gifts and talents and ensuring success is not predicted by background.

Successful IEP Meetings: Lessons from Both Sides of the Table

Speakers: Elizabeth Polay, Shareholder, Garrett Hemann Robertson P.C.
Emma Christopherson, Attorney at Law, Garrett Hemann Robertson P.C.
Colin Milton, Attorney at Law, Garrett Hemann Robertson P.C.

IEP meetings are the keystone of the IDEA. They form the foundation for a student's education but can also be a source of frustration, missed communication, and tense relationships between district staff and parents of students with disabilities. This session will provide suggestions for successfully navigating the often-fraught waters of facilitating IEP meetings with an eye toward ensuring legal compliance. Attorney Elizabeth Polay has represented both parents and districts over the course of her legal career and will share valuable insights from advocating and participating in IEP meetings from both perspectives. Joining her will be Emma Christopherson, who represented the Department of Education in Hawaii on special education matters, and Colin Milton, who also represents school districts throughout Oregon. Together, Elizabeth, Emma, and Colin will cover best practices for preparing for an IEP meeting, communicating and working with difficult parties, legal compliance within the IEP document, Oregon-specific requirements like abbreviated day programs, and much more.

Alternatives to Exclusion for Substance Use

Speakers: Lisa Joy Bateman, IDEA Initiatives Team Lead, Discipline Data Steward, ODE
Brenda Martinek, Recovery Schools Education Specialist, ODE
Alanna Russell, Substance Use Prevention Education Coordinator, ODE
HollyTate, School District Support Specialist, ODE
DanicaJensen Weiner, Educational Equity, Safety, and Restorative Justice Specialist, ODE

Session Highlights Could Include:

- Background & Scope of the Issue: Data and trends showing how substance use exclusions disproportionately impact students with disabilities and other marginalized groups.
- Youth Voice: Featuring perspectives or quotes from alternative schools, Recovery High School and/or Oregon Youth Addiction Alliance (OYAA) students.
- Legal Considerations: Clarifying what schools must do, what they can't do, and the gray areas in between. Including guidance on informal removals and MDRs (Manifestation Determination Review).
- School Board Policy and/or Procedure changes:
 - Adding support options for students struggling with SU as opposed to exclusionary practices
 - Safe and inclusive options for students who divulge their own SU issues and ask for help
 - Procedural changes to include SU support (keeping students in school, as opposed to out of school)
- Alternatives to Exclusion:
 - Restorative justice practices
 - Integration into IEP goals (e.g., teaching replacement behaviors)
 - Behavior support plans

Practical Tools and Interactive Component:

- FAQs and common troubleshooting
- Skill-building strategies
- Sample policy changes

- Sample procedural changes
- Systems review and needs assessment templates
- Practice scenarios for teams
- Inviting participants to share challenges and successful approaches

High Cost Disability Financial Planning & Reporting

Speaker: Jackie Olsen, Executive Director, OASBO

Join Jackie Olsen from OASBO for this hands-on workshop designed to strengthen partnerships between Special Education Directors and Business Managers in managing Oregon's high cost disability funding.

What You'll Learn:

- Calculate high cost disability funding using Oregon's current formulas
- Develop collaborative planning strategies for forecasting and budgeting
- Implement tracking systems and documentation tools
- Navigate state reporting requirements with confidence

Hands-On Tools Provided:

- Excel calculation templates
- Budget planning worksheets
- Tracking and monitoring forms
- Reporting checklists
- Collaboration guides

This interactive session provides immediately implementable tools and strategies to streamline processes, ensure compliance, and maximize resources for students.

Thursday, October 16, 2025 | 9:45 to 10:45

Building Strong Superintendent, Special Education, School Relationships for Inclusion Excellence

Speakers: Danielle Hudson, Superintendent, Clatskanie SD

Ashlee Hudson, Metropolitan Learning Center Principal, Portland Public Schools

Lori Krumm, Executive Administrator for Student Services, Beaverton SD

In today's educational landscape, the relationship between the superintendent and the special education department is more critical than ever. Navigating the complexities of special education requires a deep understanding of its dynamics, especially within a highly litigious environment. This session will explore how fostering a robust partnership between these key roles can lead to improved outcomes for all students. Join us for an insightful discussion with a panel of experts including a Superintendent, an Executive Administrator for Student Services, and an Elementary Principal who bring diverse perspectives and firsthand experience to the table. Attendees will learn practical strategies for building strong, collaborative relationships, ensuring legal compliance, and creating an inclusive educational environment that meets the needs of all students.

Accessibility: Empowering All Learners

Speaker: Zach Desjarlais, K-12 Education Leadership Executive, Apple Education

Given the range of learning styles and abilities of students today, educators need technology and resources to accommodate and personalize learning. Apple builds accessibility features into every product, so everyone can use them in ways that work best for them. Join us to discuss how Apple allows all students and teachers to explore, communicate, and create.

Data-Driven Inclusion: Reducing Restraints, Improving Access, and Elevating Achievement

Speakers: Ryan Carpenter, Superintendent, Estacada SD

Jill Bennett, Director of Student Services, Estacada SD

This breakout dives deep on how data-informed decision-making and inclusive practices can transform both student outcomes and staff experiences. By leveraging improvement science and evidence-based leadership, Estacada School District successfully expanded access to the general education classroom while protecting employees through a dramatic reduction—86%—in physical incidents over three years. Attendees will gain practical strategies for using short cycles of improvement to strengthen systems, break down barriers, and create classrooms where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Micro-PDs, Macro Impact: Rethinking Professional Learning for Special Education Teams

Speakers: Lauren Briggsby, Director of Student Services, West Linn-Wilsonville SD

Calley Owings, Assistant Director of Student Services, West Linn-Wilsonville SD

Stephanie Clawson, Assistant Director of Student Services, West Linn-Wilsonville SD

In response to time constraints and staff feedback, our district launched Micro-PDs. 10-15 minute professional learning bursts, often embedded into team meetings. These mini-sessions are designed to be practical, responsive, and immediately applicable, especially for paraeducators and special education professionals. In this session, we'll share how Micro-PDs are structured, how we align them to staff needs and research, and the outcomes we're seeing in staff confidence, collaboration, and instructional consistency.

Reports and Investigations of Sexual Conduct

Speakers: Michael Salitore, Investigations & Complaints Unit Coordinator, ODE
Maya Heim, RISC Unit Manager, ODE

Join ODE's RISC Unit team to learn about the process, review case studies, and a discussion on how the work can inform your efforts in keeping students safe.

High School Learning for All: Investing in UDL to Transform Learning in 9-12 Classrooms

Speakers: Jennifer Spencer-Iiams, Deputy Superintendent, West Linn-Wilsonville SD
Trevor Menne, Principal, West Linn-Wilsonville SD

Join us for an inspiring session where we dive into practical, transformative strategies that are successfully used in our high schools. You'll discover how the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) help teachers plan for variability in their classrooms, supporting access and challenge for all. Explore how UDL's proactive, flexible design approach aligns with a foundational equity stance, ensuring that all learners have access and opportunity to succeed, regardless of background, ability, or learning profile. Leave with examples and actionable tools that work in the high school setting, ready to create an inclusive learning environment where all students thrive.

Thursday, October 16, 2025 | 11:00 to 12:00

Architects of Access: Building Effective Systems for Bilingual Facilitators

Speakers: Heather Huzefka, Co-Founder, Outreach Communication
Patricia Martinez, Co-Founder, Outreach Communications

Educational leaders are architects of access, shaping how families and staff experience special education meetings. A bilingual facilitator cannot succeed alone; it takes a well-coached team working within a clear structure. This session guides administrators to reflect on the full system of support in an interpreted special education meeting—from hiring, training, and retaining staff to defining roles and protocols that keep communication clear. The special education meeting is where policy meets practice—and interpreters are central to access. Through scenarios and reflection, participants will identify gaps and strengthen systems that make meetings equitable and effective for every participant.

Keeping Students and Staff Safe, OTIS

Speakers: Lindsay Bigelow, Chief Investigator, Office of Training, Investigations and Safety (OTIS)
Krista Duval, Office of Training, Investigations and Safety (OTIS)
Shanti Slocumb, Office of Training, Investigations and Safety (OTIS)

Join us for an in-depth conversation exploring the critical issues surrounding wrongful restraint and seclusion practices. This presentation will delve into the specifics of what is considered child abuse regarding restraint and seclusion in education settings. We will discuss real life examples of investigations we have conducted, lessons learned and considerations for those working in school settings.

The Science of Inclusion: Driving Student Achievement and Protecting Educators

Speaker: Ryan Carpenter, Superintendent, Estacada SD

This session explores how inclusive practices, grounded in improvement science, can unlock student potential while safeguarding the well-being of educators. Drawing from Estacada School District's journey, participants will see how evidence-based leadership and short cycles of improvement created classrooms where all students—general education and special education alike—thrive together. With the highest on-time graduation rate in Oregon for students served by special education and an 86% decrease in unwanted physical contact incidents over three years, Estacada's story proves that safer environments and higher achievement can go hand-in-hand when systems shift toward inclusion.

Building Capacity for Regulation: A Systems-Level Response to Student and Staff Needs

Speakers: Stephanie Clawson, Assistant Director of Student Services, West Linn Wilsonville SD
Rebekka Gliedman, Regulation Skills Coordinator, West Linn Wilsonville SD
Jennifer Caslavka, Regulation Skills Coordinator, West Linn Wilsonville SD

Student regulation challenges don't just impact behavior - they affect learning, relationships, and staff sustainability. In this session, we'll explore how our district created the Regulation Skills Coordinator role to address these needs and build capacity for teams. From identifying the gap, to designing and implementing the role, we'll share what it looks like in practice, how it integrates across teams, and the outcomes we're seeing in student growth and staff resilience.

Growing and Supporting Special Education Teachers: What we've learned at the EAC

Speakers: Myrna Munoz, Professional Learning Specialist, Educator Advancement Council
Jen Lindwall, Educator Workforce Development & Equity Coordinator, Educator Advancement Council
Alyssa Nestler, Educator Networks & Professional Learning Coordinator, Educator Advancement Council

Oregon's Special Education workforce faces some of the highest turnover rates in the state, with only 19% of classroom-based Special Education staff identifying as racially or ethnically diverse. This panel will share insights from EAC grant work and explore equity-centered strategies to recruit, support, and retain Special Education teachers who reflect and serve Oregon's diverse student population. Aligned with COSA's Equity Stance, this session highlights what educators need to thrive in this essential field—and what systems must do to sustain them.

Structured Literacy Across Tiers: Integrating MTSS, RTI, and the Science of Reading

Speaker: Tiyi Smith, Sr. National Academy Advisor, Renaissance

This session empowers educators and instructional leaders to align Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) with the Science of Reading to improve literacy outcomes for all students. Participants will explore structured literacy practices, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive strategies that support diverse learners, including those with dyslexia. Rooted in equity, this session reflects COSA's Equity Stance by promoting access to high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction across all tiers of support—ensuring every student, regardless of background or ability, has the opportunity to become a confident, capable reader.

Thursday, October 16, 2025 | 1:15 to 2:15

Defining & Supporting Bilingual Facilitator's Role in Special Education Communication

Speakers: Patricia Martinez, Co-Founder, Outreach Communications
Heather Huzefka, Co-Founder, Outreach Communications

From the perspective of a veteran Bilingual Facilitator, this session moves beyond theory to address the systemic gaps that leave Bilingual Facilitators feeling unsupported and their roles misunderstood. We will explore the critical difference between being a simple conduit for words and a true linguistic bridge for families. This presentation provides administrators and SPED staff with key questions to build collaborative systems, clarify roles, and provide meaningful support. Through examining real-world scenarios, participants will experience critical decision making moments that Bilingual Facilitators regularly face that lead to miscommunication or a successful meeting and how to be prepared as a team.

Inclusive Practices - Playground to Classroom

Speaker: Cynthia Vargas, Special Education Attorney, Fagen, Friedman & Fulfroft

This presentation will focus on how to build capacity to fully include our students with exceptional needs into all aspects of the school day. This is beyond "mainstreaming." These materials will focus on collaboration between special and general education teachers to ensure full engagement of all students, with adaptation of materials/curriculum, team/group assignments in class, peer buddy options, etc.

A Blueprint for Equity and Compliance: The Special Education Administrator's Guide to Legally Sound Investigations

Speakers: Tania Tong, CEO and Licensed Private Investigator, Prism Investigations
Monica Pardo, Licensed Private Investigator, PRISM Investigations
Rebecca Scott, Licensed Private Investigator, PRISM Investigations

This presentation provides a comprehensive, 5-step framework for special education directors to conduct legally sound investigations into complaints and concerns. The session delves into critical stages from information gathering and analysis to effective report writing, all while navigating the complex legal landscape of IDEA and Section 504. The training emphasizes how a clear, unbiased investigation process serves as a cornerstone of equity work, ensuring accountability and upholding every student's right to the services and supports they are legally entitled to.

Addressing the Underlying Conditions that Impact Special Educator Capacity to Support and Care for ALL Students and Families

Speaker: Alyssa Lund, Program Director, Gresham-Barlow SD

All students with disabilities and their families have a right to informed participation in educational decision-making. Special educators are the link between the complex processes and student and family engagement. Understanding the conditions that impact special educators' professional capacity and effective collaboration is necessary to lay the foundation for supportive and caring processes for students and families. In this session, we will reference the findings from a participatory activist action research (PAAR) study as a tool to unpack how we can increase the capacity of our school based teams to promote increased authentic engagement of students and families.

Addressing and Eliminating Informal Removals

Speakers: Lisa Joy Bateman, IDEA Initiatives Team Lead, Discipline Data Steward, ODE
Holly Tate, District Support Specialist, ODE

This session will explore the impact of informal removals on all students, with particular attention to those historically marginalized in our education system, including students navigating disability. Unlike formal disciplinary removals, which follow clear procedures, informal removals impose consequences without transparency or documentation and result in lost instructional time. Participants will examine proactive strategies, policy implementation, IDEA legal requirements, and capacity-building practices to eliminate informal removals while promoting equitable, supportive learning environments. The session will provide practical tools for using data-informed practices to identify, monitor, and address informal removals. Emphasis will be placed on implementing school policies and procedures that proactively address behaviors of concern, foster safe and inclusive learning environments, and prevent reliance on informal removals.

Partnering for Success: Elevating Parent and Family Input in the IEP Process

Speakers: Rachel Hampton, Special Education Director, Lebanon Community SD
Marissa Bartley, Parent

Parent and family voice is essential in the IEP process because families offer critical insight into a child's strengths, challenges, and aspirations. Their perspectives help cultivate the unique gifts, talents, and interests of every Oregon student, ensuring that educational supports reflect the whole child. By centering family input, schools honor lived experiences and build authentic partnerships that challenge barriers to equity.

Thursday, October 16, 2025 | 2:30 to 3:30

Empowering Voices: How Monolingual Leaders Can Support and Train Bilingual Staff to Serve as School Interpreters

Speakers: Dana Christie, Director of Special Programs, Newberg-Dundee Public Schools
Pam Lybarger, Director of Special Education, Dallas SD

Bilingual staff are vital in bridging communication between schools and linguistically diverse families, yet many act as interpreters without proper training or support. This session, led by a monolingual school administrator, offers practical strategies for identifying, supporting, and developing bilingual staff to interpret ethically and effectively. Participants will learn the difference between interpretation and translation, common challenges bilingual staff face, and how monolingual leaders can build trust and offer support. The session also highlights low-cost training resources and key legal and ethical considerations. Ideal for leaders committed to equity and multilingual family engagement—no second language required.

Special Education Hot Topics

Speaker: Joel Hungerford, Partner, The Hungerford Law Firm

Explore the most pressing issues facing special education today. This session addresses current trends, emerging challenges, and innovative solutions shaping the field. Gain practical insights into navigating complex situations, understanding recent SPED policy developments, and implementing effective strategies to better serve students with disabilities.

Success Without Limits: Inclusive Practices for Every Oregon Student

Speaker: Alicia Balfrey, OrPATs Project-Autism Training Consultant, OrPATs State-wide Grant Project

This session equips educators with strategies to meaningfully include students with autism, ensuring every learner experiences belonging and success. Grounded in MTSS and evidence-based practices, participants will explore universal supports, environmental design, and progress monitoring tools while embracing a team-based approach. Aligned with COSA's equity stance, the presentation emphasizes transforming systems, interrupting barriers, and ensuring access to rigorous opportunities. Educators will leave with practical tools to advance inclusion, equity, and belonging for all Oregon students.

Beyond Accommodations: Creating Truly Inclusive Learning Environments for DHH Students

Speakers: Ana Brooks, Parent Partner/Outreach & Training Specialist, Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center
Karen Benson, Health and Education Project Manager, Oregon Center for Children and Youth with Special Health Needs

Go beyond typical accommodations to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students in mainstream environments. This presentation will examine the systemic barriers these students face and why broader support is essential for an equitable learning experience. We will explore the critical role of collaboration among students, parents, and school staff, and share lessons learned from a parent currently navigating the system with their DHH student. Learn how these tools can support you in assisting your DHH student both academically and socially in the classroom.

Lessons Learned from Abbreviated School Day Program Complaints and Investigations: Improving Systems with Courage

Speaker: Kara Nystrom Boulahanis, Operations & Policy Analyst, ODE

This session will explore the common themes and challenges identified through the Oregon Department of Education's (ODE) investigation of complaints related to Abbreviated School Day Programs (ASDPs). Participants will gain insight into compliance with state law, review patterns and trends observed across districts, and explore the implications for equity, student rights, and

access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Presenters will offer practical, proactive strategies to avoid common pitfalls, strengthen local procedures, and collaborate with students and families in legally compliant, student-centered ways. Time will be provided for Q&A and shared reflection on lessons learned across the state.

Using AI and Strategic Equity Frameworks to Reimagine Professional Learning for Special Educators

Speakers: Caitlan Freese, Special Education Coordinator, Northwest Regional ESD
Cathy Jensen, Executive Director, K-12 Special Education, Northwest Regional ESD

Every student deserves high-quality education that sustains their cultural identity and full potential. To achieve this, leaders must intentionally build communities of practice that strengthen collective efficacy, align with district priorities, and center culturally sustaining practices, while ensuring special educators meet procedural compliance requirements. This session draws on examples from NWRESA's Speech-Language Pathology program, equity frameworks, and customized AI tools to demonstrate how to design a year-long professional learning plan that is both strategic and equity-driven.

Friday, October 17, 2025 | 9:40 to 10:40

Students at the Center: Creating Safe and Welcoming Spaces for Dually Identified Learners

Speakers: Marcianne Rivero Koetje, Multilingual and Equity Coordinator, Corvallis SD
Megan Newell, SpEd Coordinator, Corvallis SD

This breakout session addresses the critical intersectionality of Special Education and English Language Learners through the transformative framework of Students at the Center: Rightful Presence. Its core purpose is to move beyond superficial inclusion efforts to actively co-create environments where all students experience true belonging and personal growth, ensuring those historically treated as "guests" feel a genuine sense of rightful presence. This shift is powered by three key concepts: emphasizing Asset-Based Language to celebrate student strengths rather than focus on deficits; promoting Neurodiversity by recognizing the value and unique strengths of various neurotypes; and utilizing Community Cultural Wealth to acknowledge and leverage the rich cultural knowledge students and their communities bring. Ultimately, the session aims to equip educators with the mindset and tools to center students and cultivate a culture of unconditional belonging for this population.

Demonstrating Progress through IEP Development

Speaker: Cynthia Vargas, Special Education Attorney, Fagan, Firedman & Fulfro

It is critical that we develop appropriate universally designed programs to support all of our students, including those with exceptional needs. It is equally important to show the progress from those efforts. This process takes us beyond reporting progress on goals, to showing progress throughout the IEP, including the present levels, baselines and newly developed goals. The session will include practical tips for building stronger IEPs. The information will help to strengthen, or rebuild, relationships with family members, because they can see their child's growth. Finally, it is the best way to provide evidence of positive outcomes.

Brains in the Classroom: From Educator Assumptions to Student Learning - Part 1

Speaker: Jonathan Nitz, Educational Psychology, District Lead School Psychologist, Hermiston SD

This two-part interactive session explores how both educator and student brain processes shape learning, behavior, and equity in schools. Part 1 ("Your Brain and the Decisions It Makes") helps participants uncover how stress, assumptions, and implicit bias can unintentionally reinforce systemic barriers that disproportionately affect historically marginalized students. Part 2 ("Reading and the Brain") applies neuroscience to literacy development, challenging deficit-based assumptions about language, readiness, and ability while highlighting how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and culturally responsive instruction promote equitable access to literacy for all students. Together, these sessions center equity by combining self-reflection with evidence-based practice: participants first examine how their own brain processes influence decision-making, then learn how to design inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive learning environments that disrupt inequitable outcomes in reading and beyond.

Using AI to Transform Progress Monitoring

Speaker: Sean Klamm, Founder, Playground IEP

This session introduces the Golden IEP Feedback Loop—a practical framework that uses AI to connect Present Levels, IEP Goals, Assessments, and Goal Tracking in one continuous cycle. Participants will learn how to streamline progress monitoring, reduce paperwork, and use real-time data to improve student outcomes. Through live examples, we will demonstrate how AI tools can strengthen compliance, save time, and ensure that IEPs remain meaningful and responsive throughout the school year.

AAC: Building Capacity Across the Team

Speakers: Avital Rosenfeld, AT Specialist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Clackamas ESD
Kimberly Long, EI/ECSE Program Administrator, SLP, Clackamas ESD

This session highlights how a capacity-building model expands equitable access to Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) for students. By equipping speech-language pathologists with tools and structures to maximize their impact, our program empowers educators to confidently support early AAC use, reducing daily reliance on SLPs. This approach has increased the number of children with devices, strengthened staff skills, and ensured communication access is not limited by staffing shortages. Aligned with COSA's equity stance, the model dismantles systemic barriers and fosters inclusive opportunities for every learner.

Progress Monitoring for Behavior and Social Emotional Goals

Speaker: Patrick Kelly, Education Specialist, ODE

This session will focus on the importance of effectively monitoring behavior and social emotional goals on IEPs and Behavior Intervention Plans. Objectives to be covered include: Understand legal requirements for data collection. Select and use tools and methods for monitoring behavior and SEL. Define and measure target behaviors. Embed data collection into daily routines efficiently. Assign clear roles and responsibilities. Visualize and interpret data to guide decisions. Apply best practices for sharing progress with teams and families. Use data to adjust interventions, celebrate growth, and motivate students.

Oregon's New Brain Injury Accommodations Law: HB 3007 and What Schools Need to Know

Speakers: Brad Hendershott, Program Administrator, Region 6 TBI Liaison, Columbia Regional Inclusive Services
David Kracke, Attorney, Brain Injury Policy Coordinator, Center for Brain Injury Research and Training at the University of Oregon
Ely Sanders, Education Specialist, ODE

In 2025, Oregon passed HB 3007, a new law requiring schools to provide an Immediate Temporary Accommodations Plan (ITAP) for students returning to the classroom after a concussion or other medically diagnosed brain injury, once a parent provides written notification and requests accommodations. This session will review the purpose and rationale for the law, including research on the importance of timely supports for recovery. Attendees will learn the specific requirements of HB 3007, how to access the Oregon Department of Education's sample form and written guidance, and best practice guidelines for implementing ITAP effectively to support students with TBI.

Friday, October 17, 2025 | 11:00 to 12:00

Instructional Practices to Promote Equity and Inclusion and Achieve True Social Integration in the Classroom

Speakers: Mark Van Ryzin, Director, Center on Educational Innovation, University of Oregon
Joel Sebastian, Director of Innovative Partnerships, University of Oregon

Small-group instruction provides opportunities for students to engage in positive social interactions while learning academic content. These positive social interactions promote beneficial behavioral, social-emotional, and academic outcomes, including reductions in bias, prejudice, and disparities for members of minoritized groups. Unfortunately, small-group instruction is often implemented in an informal fashion, which can be quick and easy, but often not successful, because it lacks several important design principles that are vital to its success. In this workshop, attendees will develop a deep understanding of these key design principles and how to implement evidence-based best practices in small-group learning in diverse classrooms.

Best Practices in Special Education

Speaker: Joel Hungerford, Partner, The Hungerford Law Firm

Navigate the legal landscape of special education with confidence. Learn proactive strategies to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations while protecting students' rights and district interests. This session covers common legal pitfalls, documentation best practices, IEP compliance essentials, and effective family communication strategies to minimize legal risks and strengthen procedural safeguards.

Brains in the Classroom: From Educator Assumptions to Student Learning - Part 2

Speaker: Jonathan Nitz, Educational Psychology, District Lead School Psychologist, Hermiston SD

This two-part interactive session explores how both educator and student brain processes shape learning, behavior, and equity in schools. Part 1 ("Your Brain and the Decisions It Makes") helps participants uncover how stress, assumptions, and implicit bias can unintentionally reinforce systemic barriers that disproportionately affect historically marginalized students. Part 2 ("Reading and the Brain") applies neuroscience to literacy development, challenging deficit-based assumptions about language, readiness, and ability while highlighting how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and culturally responsive instruction promote equitable access to literacy for all students. Together, these sessions center equity by combining self-reflection with evidence-based practice: participants first examine how their own brain processes influence decision-making, then learn how to design inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive learning environments that disrupt inequitable outcomes in reading and beyond.

Promoting push-ins for services: changing the SDI model to prioritize inclusion

Speaker: Angelica Mountainspring-Wood, Principal/Special Education Director, Oakridge SD

When thinking about ways to include our students in special education, often overlooked is the SDI support that can be provided in the classroom. Whether through a co-teaching model, or with individualized support, students with disabilities can have much of their learning with their non-disabled peers: more than we are currently implementing. When viewed through an equity lens, promoting inclusion through increased push-in services is a way to lessen disparities in education for our students with disabilities, giving as much time as possible in the general education setting.

Maintenance of Effort

Speaker: Tenneal Wetherell, Deputy Director of Operations, ODE

You'll learn:

- The four MOE tests and how your district demonstrates compliance
- Common pitfalls that trigger MOE violations and how to avoid them
- What happens when districts don't meet MOE requirements
- How to work with your business office to monitor and maintain compliance
- Real-world scenarios and when exceptions may apply
- As a new SPED director, understanding

MOE is essential for budget planning conversations and ensuring your district doesn't inadvertently reduce special education funding. Tenneal will provide practical guidance and answer your specific questions about navigating this complex requirement.

Beyond Compliance: Creating High-Quality IEP Goals That Drive Progress

Speakers: Crystal Brumfield, Director of IDEA Programs, ODE
Stacy Matthews, Education Support Specialist, ODE

This session will provide Oregon special education directors with practical strategies for strengthening the quality of measurable IEP goals. Using state supervision data as a backdrop, participants will explore how a well-written PLAAFP sets the foundation for meaningful, compliant goals. Through interactive examples and practice opportunities, directors will refine their ability to identify strong versus weak goals, ensure alignment across the IEP, and strengthen progress monitoring systems to support student outcomes.

At the Ready: District SPED Compliance for Staff Support/Growth

Speakers: Pam Lybarger, Director of Special Education, Dallas SD
Dana Christie, Director of Special Education, Newberg SD

Dr. Pam Lybarger will share some at the ready strategies for improving legally defensible IEPs that meet compliance standards. We are all responsible for growing new special educators....here is a quick way to support all special educators. This session will focus on creating a sustainable way to regularly spot check IEPs for compliance standards that will assist you in meeting or exceeding your special education department goals and equity throughout your system. We will review a variety of proven ways to review IEPs in your district that is accessible regardless of size of your system and meet compliance standards. You will walk away with actionable steps and useable resources.