

Oregon Small Schools Association News



A Voice for Small Schools

The Oregon Small Schools Association is a nonprofit organization of small schools who have the common goal of ensuring their interests are heard in Salem and in the larger education community.



February 2025

OSSA Update on Accountability Framework Development

Last spring, I was invited by ODE to help develop a statewide accountability framework. This task force, created by 2023 legislation, aimed to assess the current system and provide recommendations to the Governor. With Dr. Williams' support, it was an opportunity to bring a Small Schools perspective to the conversation. The committee was large and diverse, with representatives from across the state. While the work was challenging, we had important discussions about how to measure student and district success fairly. Ultimately, the group reached a balanced recommendation that reflected various stakeholder perspectives.

As an OSSA Board Member, my priority was ensuring accountability remained practical. A recurring issue was the overwhelming amount of data districts already collect through reports and plans, which often seem to disappear into a black hole. As a superintendent/principal, I know firsthand how limited our capacity is for reporting. The final draft acknowledged this concern, incorporating language to prevent additional data collection burdens. COSA was a strong partner in advocating for Small Schools, ensuring OSSA had the credibility and access needed to influence the discussion.

In December, ODE submitted its final draft to the Governor's office after months of work. Unfortunately, the response favored a more punitive approach reminiscent of NCLB, focusing on strict interventions for low-performing schools rather than collaborative support. OSSA and COSA remain committed to promoting a fair accountability system that provides struggling schools with meaningful assistance rather than unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. Over the coming months, OSSA will continue engaging with education leaders to push for a practical, student-centered framework. We encourage you to connect with your regional OSSA representative as we move forward in this effort.

Sincerely,

Andy Boe, Superintendent Elkton School District

andy.boe@elkton.k12.or.us

Keynote Speaker for the 2025 OSSA Annual Conference



We are thrilled to announce that Ms. Karen Cagle will be the keynote speaker at this year's Oregon Small Schools Association Annual Conference, held on April 17th and 18th at the beautiful Salishan Resort on the Oregon Coast.

Ms. Cagle brings over 30 years of experience in education, having served in the Troup County School District in Georgia until her retirement in 2018. Her extensive career includes roles as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, federal programs coordinator, and assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and professional learning. With a wealth of expertise in leadership development, school and district improvement, curriculum development, and stakeholder engagement, Ms. Cagle has become a recognized leader in the field.

Since joining the Center for Model Schools in 2018, Ms. Cagle has worked with districts nationwide, providing professional learning and individualized coaching to help schools grow and thrive. Her ability to foster positive relationships and inspire educators has made her a valued mentor and coach.

We are excited to hear her insights at this year's conference and look forward to the impactful discussions she will lead on improving education for all students. Don't miss the opportunity to learn from Ms. Cagle's vast experience and deep passion for education!

Meet Krista Nieraeth: New Board Member of the Oregon Small Schools Association

"No matter the zip code, all students deserve to have the best education opportunities possible"



We are excited to introduce Krista Nieraeth, the newest member of the OSSA Executive Board. Krista is in her second year as the Superintendent/Principal of the Alsea School District, a small, rural district nestled in the beautiful Coastal Mountain Range near Corvallis. Her journey in education spans over two decades, beginning with her work as a high school science teacher in southern Louisiana through the Teach for America program. After returning to Oregon, Krista taught Junior High and High School Science and Math at Bonanza High School, her alma mater.

Krista's dedication to small rural schools is evident from her extensive career in education. She spent ten years in the Port Orford - Langlois School District, where she served in multiple roles, including K-12 Principal, Special Education Director, and Federal Grants Coordinator. Her passion for supporting and advocating for small schools ultimately led her to the position of Superintendent in Alsea.

When Krista isn't busy leading her district, she enjoys exploring all the diverse corners of Oregon, spending quality time with her family, and watching college basketball. She's also making time to indulge in her love of reading for fun!

Reflecting on her new role on the OSSA Executive Board, Krista shared, "I am excited to serve on the OSSA Executive Board, because as someone who was educated and has spent 19 of my 21 years in education in small rural schools, I truly believe that no matter the zip code, all students deserve to have the best educational opportunities possible. My goal is to help small schools connect, share resources, and advocate for continued financial support at the state level so that we can provide our students with as

many opportunities as possible."

Krista's commitment to rural education and her deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by small schools make her an invaluable addition to the OSSA team. We look forward to her contributions and leadership as we work together to support small schools across Oregon.

Meet Danielle Hudson: New Board Member of the Oregon Small Schools Association

"As someone who grew up in a rural community, I understand the importance of providing students in these areas with access to the same opportunities as their counterparts in larger districts"



We are excited to introduce Danielle Hudson, one of the new members of the OSSA Executive Board. Danielle is in her second year as the Superintendent of the Clatskanie School District, a small rural district located along the scenic Columbia River. Before taking on this leadership role, Danielle served as the Executive Administrator for Student Services in the Beaverton School District and as Director of Student Support Services for the Molalla River School District. Over the course of her career, Danielle has focused on ensuring all students, particularly those in rural areas, have access to equitable and high-quality education.

In Clatskanie, Danielle has taken an active role in the community, including starting a unified basketball team where she serves as one of the coaches. Her dedication to rural education and providing students with the resources they need to succeed is at the heart of her work.

Reflecting on her new position with the OSSA Executive Board, Danielle shared, "I wanted to join the OSSA board because I am deeply committed to advocating for rural education. As someone who grew up in a rural community, I understand the importance of providing students in these areas with access to the same opportunities as their counterparts in larger districts. I am dedicated to ensuring that rural schools continue to thrive and offer students the support and resources they need to succeed."

Danielle's passion for rural education and her experience in advocating for students' needs make her a valuable addition to the OSSA team. We look forward to her leadership as we continue to support and strengthen small schools across Oregon.

Meet Heidi Sipe: New Board Member of the Oregon Small Schools Association

"Rural students have equal talent to urban peers but are often limited by reduced access to resources"



The Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Heidi Sipe to its Board of Directors. Sipe brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to education, particularly in rural communities.

Since 2007, Sipe has served as the Superintendent of the Umatilla School District in northeast Oregon. Born and raised in Eastern Washington, she began her work in Eastern Oregon in 2000 and developed a deep passion for rural education, especially for students of poverty and emerging bilingual students. She believes that rural students

have equal talent to urban peers but are often limited by reduced access to resources.

Sipe's leadership extends beyond her district. She has chaired the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission, served on the Oregon Taskforce on School Funding, and was a founding councilor of the Oregon Educator Advancement Council. She has also served two terms as Superintendent Advisor to the State Board of Education. Nationally, she is on the Executive Committee for AASA, the national School Superintendents Association, and has served on the AASA Governance Committee for two terms. She is a past-president of the Oregon School Association of School Executives and is active in the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA).

In 2016, Sipe was honored as Oregon's Superintendent of the Year. A hands-on leader, she volunteers to coach the high school robotics team, 4125 Confidential, which was featured in the documentary "Big Dreams in Umatilla," aired nationwide on PBS stations in 2021.

Her extensive experience and dedication to education will be invaluable assets to the OSBA Board as it continues to advocate for quality education across Oregon.

Learn more about new board member Robert Medley of Harney County School District in our next newsletter.

Would you like to serve on the Oregon Small Schools Association Board of Directors?

Email carter.michael@lakeview.k12.or.us for more information

All Invited! OSSA Board Meeting February 10th



We are excited to remind you that next week is the 2025 Winter Conference (OASBO/OACOA/OASE), happening on February 11-12, 2025, at the Salem Convention Center in Oregon. We hope to see many of you there!

Before the conference kicks off, the Oregon Small Schools Association (OSSA) will hold a board meeting on Monday, February 10th, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. This meeting is open to all OSSA members, and we invite you to attend. If you can't join us in person, don't worry—a Zoom link will be provided. This is a great opportunity to learn about OSSA's current initiatives and get involved with our team. An agenda was shared with all members earlier this week.

During the conference, stop by the OSSA table to meet with us, ask questions, and learn more about what we're doing for small schools across Oregon.

2025 Oregon Small Schools Association Annual Conference - Save the Date!



The 2025 OSSA Annual Conference is quickly approaching, and you won't want to miss out on this great opportunity to connect, learn, and grow with your colleagues.

The conference will take place on April 17-18, 2025, at the Salishan Resort on the Oregon Coast. Registration is now open, and you can easily register for the conference and book your lodging at Salishan using the link below. We've also included the conference schedule to help with your travel planning. Don't forget, the final day to secure the group rate is March 31, 2025!

[Register Here and Book Lodging](#)

We are thrilled to announce that our keynote speaker will be Karen Cagle, who will share her insights on Professional Leadership. Ms. Cagle has extensive experience in education and will inspire and motivate us all as we focus on leadership development in small schools.

In addition to the keynote, the conference agenda is packed with valuable sessions on important topics, including:

- PACE Legal Issues
- Best Legal Practices
- SPED 2025-2026: SPED Hot Topics
- Summer Learning Resources and Funding
- Decision-Making Strategies
- Superintendent Contracts
- Building Strong Teams Between Superintendents and Administrative Assistants
- Trauma-Informed Care
- Hot Topic Session with Practicing Administrators and Experts
- And much more!

This conference is designed specifically for small school superintendents, their assistants, principals, district office administrators, and key support staff. It's the one event of the year you won't want to miss.

Open Board Member Positions – OSSA

We currently have two open board member positions for the following regions:

Region 2: Clackamas, Marion, Polk, Yamhill

Region 3: Benton, Lane, Lincoln, Linn

If you are interested in filling one of these seats and contributing to the future of OSSA, please contact Executive Director Michael Carter at 503-369-9486 or via email at carter.michael@lakeview.k12.or.us.

Your Opinion Matters

Thank you to the 63 Oregon superintendents who have completed our member survey! Haven't had a chance to submit your response yet? Submit your response by Friday, February 14th. Scan below to respond now.



Prepared by Assist Education Services LLC