



Small Talk

the official newsletter of the
OREGON SMALL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

The Road Less Traveled



By: **Michael Lasher**
OSSA Executive Director

In reflecting upon the outcome of the last legislative session, I'm reminded of the words I overheard from another member of the education

lobby: "Now I know how Atlanta felt when Sherman's army marched through it."

Indeed, it seems that we got far more done to us than done for us. The "Education Package," as the raft of bills that were passed on the last day of the session was named, created structural changes in the way K-12 education will be delivered in Oregon.

From the eventual elimination of an elected State Superintendent, to state-wide open enrollment and the ability of district's to withdraw from their ESD, many of the underpinnings to the system of K-12 education which have been bulwarks against change have been weakened or swept away, and in their place we have the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) and the Early Learning Council.

Recommendations from the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) and the Early Childhood Council are expected to be packaged into legislation for the 2012 session.

I am confident the Oregon Small Schools Association will not fight change just to preserve the status quo, however, we must be

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2012 OSSA Teacher of the Year: Leslie Walborn



In 37 years of teaching, Leslie Walborn has seen her share of changes in education. She has survived budget deficits, legislative mandates, changes in testing, increased technology, new strategies to bring best practices to students, and proficiency models. Yet in her many years of teaching through these changes, not once has Walborn had second thoughts about her career choice.

Walborn's dedication to putting her students first despite what challenges come her way is just one of the reasons she has been

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Hey! It's about the kids!

By: **Joyce Garland**, 2011 OSSA Teacher of the Year
(Sheridan School District)



In our 21st Century Schools we are inundated with rules, laws, reforms, and regulations. Whether it's NCLB, PLCs, OEA/NEA, RTI, IEPs, or one of dozens of other programs or initiatives, we, the human face in front of the clamor, are ultimately responsible for just one thing: inspiring our students to learn.

Sometimes this objective is wiped away amidst all the chaos of well-intentioned ideals. I know that I am often overwhelmed by the demands of meeting the requirements of local, state, and federal laws; of being a team player for our district and building objectives and goals; of

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certain the laws which the legislature passes do not erode the foundation of many communities: small schools.

We (Edie, Jim, Al, Casey and I) will do our best to keep you informed prior and during the legislative session. Should a really rotten idea raise its head, be confident that we will enlist your help in our fight to lop it off.

I welcome your emails and phone calls and would love to hear your thoughts on any issues you believe may affect

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contacting every parent and nurturing every child and keeping a “stiff upper lip” in the face of layoffs, pay-cuts, and increased hours in and out of the classroom. It’s enough to sap the strength of the staunchest educator. However; at the end of the day, it’s not important to our students if the school district passed the OAKS test, or if we met the NCLB federal standards. What matters are the connections we made, the learning we inspired, and the joy we shared in our time with our students.

So when the bell rings and class begins, forget the

small schools. I’ll be at OSBA in November – I hope to talk to many of you there.

~Michael

P.S. Please attend the Small Schools Breakfast on Saturday, Nov. 12, at 7:30 a.m. Meet the OSSA teacher of the year, the OSSA Board and our lobbyist Jim Green, who will give further preview of the next legislative session. See you there !!!

outside pressures and focus on what educators do best. Motivate your students with your passion for what you teach, create a classroom that is safe and nurturing, provide every opportunity for your students to learn, and remember – it’s not about the fancy laws and mandates, it’s not about the time constraints and overburdened work-force, it’s not about what exists outside our walls, but about what we give to our students day in and day out despite the pressures and frustrations.

Have a good school year, and don’t forget the kids!

OSSA Award of Excellence 2011

The Oregon Small Schools Association would like to congratulate Dana Hyde of the Vernonia School District with the 2011 OSSA Award of Excellence for her scholarship and School-to-Work coordination.

Each year, the OSSA salutes an individual, school or community for making exemplary progress in improving the education of students with the Award of Excellence.

After two devastating floods in 2007 that left the Vernonia School District in a state of disarray, Hyde worked to rebuild the District’s Career Center from nothing. In addition, Hyde identified and organized local and external funding sources for the local scholarship application process, and arranged for speakers from colleges and scholarship donors to meet with student candidates and their parents, as well as career-related field trips. Hyde also provided daily guidance and supervision of high school students utilizing the school’s library/career center to work on college, scholarship and FAFSA applications, as well as the Oregon eApp.

“Mrs. Hyde brings a high level of integrity and academic/social expectations to our small rural student population,”

said Vernonia School Board Member Greg Kintz, who nominated Hyde for the award. “Mrs. Hyde’s efforts, in conjunction with the high school counseling staff, are achieving remarkable results in our students.”

Kintz cites a shift in school climate as a direct result of Hyde’s efforts. Enrollment in colleges and other post-secondary trainings has increased “dramatically.” Within one year of the graduation of the Class of 2010, 65-70 percent of seniors expected to enroll in a college or trade school. This was a marked increase from the just 48 percent that did so from the 2007-2008 graduating class.



“By exposing our students to the many scholarship opportunities available, tracking their progress through the process, and connecting them with donors and college contacts, our students are being exposed to a vast array of career paths,” Kintz said. “Mrs. Hyde is a vital part of the mechanism within our school system that focuses our students on career paths, job shadowing, and scholarship, college and trade school applications.”

The OSSA congratulates Dana Hyde and the Vernonia School District for its dedication to student success!

selected as the 2012 Oregon Small Schools Association Teacher of the Year.

Walborn has taught at Arlington Elementary – in nearly every grade level – since 1973. Her superintendent in Arlington, Steve Boynton, said that he has never met a teacher more driven to see her students be successful.

“As a 37-year veteran, you could make some assumptions about her teaching style and the energy she exudes, and I assure you they would all be wrong,” Boynton wrote in his letter of recommendation of Walborn for the OSSA honor. “Mrs. Walborn’s energy is equaled only by her students and her approach to education philosophy and practice over the last year would put her at the forefront of educational reform. Mrs. Walborn’s current teaching methodology is to be envied and coveted by any fresh graduate of a university educational training program.”

Walborn says that her fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Robin Fletcher, inspired her own career in education. Walborn cites Mrs. Fletcher’s ability to make each day a “new adventure” as one of the reasons she strived to become a teacher herself.

Walborn’s greatest contributions to education, she says, are two-fold. First, she says she has never lost sight of making sure all of her students’ needs are met. “My students have always, and will always come first.” Second, Walborn says she has always been open to new and challenging ways to help her school and students be

the best they possibly can. “It is important to ensure each child has been given the best education you can give, and to truly care about each child as well as to see them involved in activities in and out of school,” she said.

This philosophy is evidenced by Walborn’s countless hours spent designing curriculum for new course structures for her two grade levels, said Rinda Montgomery Conwell, Assistant Superintendent of the North Central Education Service District.

“She has opened up to the change process graciously and with rigor,” Montgomery Conwell said. “She is approaching every aspect of the new model with an eye toward student success, and has commented many times she wishes she had known these concepts years ago.”

Walborn has not only made a mark in her classrooms. She spent eight years as a member of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC), including as chair and vice chair. She has taught a variety of courses at the OSSA Summer Institute, and received the Oregon Education Association’s Distinguished Leadership Award in 2007 and the OEA’s Advocacy Award in 2005.

As Walborn begins to ponder retirement in the next four years or so, she says she has begun to reflect upon the classes she has taught and what some of her former students have accomplished in their lives.

“I can truthfully say, ‘I have made a difference.’”



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2012 OSSA Teacher of the Year, Arlington Elementary teacher Leslie Walborn (center), poses with her principal, Travis Reeser, and Arlington School Board Chair April Aamodt.

Kennedy High Public Service CTE Program

Students at Kennedy High School in the Mt. Angel School District are gaining valuable career technical experience through an internship program at the school. Now in its third year, the Public Service CTE Program at Kennedy allows students to earn up to 19 college credits through internships in public service fields, such as sports medicine, through the College Credit Now Program.

Jeff Crapper, an athletic trainer and science teacher at Kennedy High, helped start the program, which this year has expanded to include the EMT/Fire CTE program and Project Lead the Way Engineering program, and in 2012-2013, will roll out the Project Lead the Way Biomedical Sciences (pre-medical) CTE program. Crapper said that \$30,000 in grants last year enabled the school to expand the program. From 2009-2011, the Kennedy Sports Medicine program provided more than \$25,000 in medical treatments to its athletes, such as massage therapy, therapeutic ultrasound, rehabilitation, electric stimulation, and acute injury care therapy.

Students in the sports medicine program have become Athletic Training Student Aides (ATSAs), and have completed and coordinated injury prevention programs for cross country, football, basketball, and track teams at Kennedy, eliminating all chronic and overuse injuries for both football and cross country. ATSAs have helped reduce shoulder dislocations, created injury rehab programs, assisted in emergency situations, and operated medical rehabilitation equipment.

In addition, ATSAs have assisted with several concussion-related medical studies. Kennedy High School has fully implemented the ImPACT Concussion Assessment system and the Oregon Concussion Awareness and Management Program guidelines with the assistance of ASTAs.

One of the senior projects last year helped the school transfer all of its medical records to an electronic format through National Children's Hospital. The program's students have formed community partnerships between their school and Providence Medical Systems, the Portland Trail Blazers, Silverton Hospital Network, Wellspring Medical Clinic, Chemeketa Community College, George Fox University, and Linfield College.



Students can use their experiences in the program to prepare for advanced medical degrees or start vocational classes as a medical assistant or certified nursing assistant. Nearly all aspects of the school's athletic training

have some aspect of student involvement, such as restocking shelves, cleaning for pathogen prevention, entering medical records, and taping or bracing athletes.

ATSAs have completed job shadows with the Portland Trailblazers, Silverton Hospital Network, Sports Medicine Oregon, Wellspring Clinics, and have provided more than 700 student internship hours on-site at athletic events at Kennedy High School.

For more information, contact Jeff Crapper at Crapper_Jeff@mtangel.k12.or.us.

Small school superintendent masters juggling act

By: **George Murdock**, Superintendent, Douglas ESD

The wilderness which plays host to Oregon's only National Park, Crater Lake, and its sister, Diamond Lake, covers a vast section of the Southern Cascades. Out of this rugged back country flow several of America's wildest and most scenic rivers.

steep valleys. One of those valleys houses the South Umpqua River. These same foothills are also home to the Days Creek School District, which serves a little over 200 students in an area a little larger than the State of Rhode Island.

It's an area of towering mountains, endless forests, and

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At the southeast end of the valley is the tiny community of Tiller, which is home to an elementary school, the U. S. Forest Service, and a sprinkling of ranches and isolated mountain homes. It is also famous for its wild turkeys. Sixteen miles to the northwest is the almost equally tiny community of Days Creek, which is home to the high school and middle school.

This idyllic, but remote, district is the unlikely bailiwick of Superintendent Laurie Newton, a Salem transplant who came here to take charge of the schools seven years ago and, despite offers to move on, has fiercely clung to a mission which she articulates with an energetic fervor.

Newton would be the first to suggest that being the only administrator brings with it a staggering array of demands and challenges. During a recent Douglas County superintendents meeting, when the 13 leaders were asked to go back to their districts and consult with their principals about an issue, Newton and several of her other colleagues at one end of the table looked up a few minutes later and said the consultation was already done. It was a reminder to their colleagues from much larger districts that some of the people in the room wear dozens of different hats.

Newton doesn't just oversee her teaching staff. When the school schedule demands subject matter expertise that doesn't exist among her staff members, she steps in and teaches. When the state requires that the district complete a mountain of reports, Newton ends up with the task.

She also has to balance the budget, keep two boards happy (the schools in Days Creek have a charter board), meet with parents, run the transportation system, evaluate the staff, handle student discipline, and address a multitude of demands that come with operating aging rural school buildings.

Newton has a flair for expressing the needs of her school district to corporations and foundations that offer money

to schools. Because of her ambitious approach to seeking outside funds, Days Creek has gotten well more than its share of outside money. One such effort may result in a major infusion of facility improvement money from Home Depot.

She also operates the Days Creek Charter School, which initially resulted in an infusion of new money and still offers options that enhance district coffers as well as program offerings.

Newton is familiar with QZAB, QSCB, and a quarter of a million dollars' worth of ARRA projects conducted in cooperation with the Department of Energy. She is currently working on an Request for Proposal for two water plant upgrades since she oversees the operation of two water plants.



This fall, Days Creek is hosting Governor John Kitzhaber for a ribbon-cutting ceremony unveiling the new biomass boiler which has been installed at the high school. A shiny new holding tank sits behind the Charter School. This will enable the district to switch from diesel fuel to biomass.

Newton's next major energy saving effort will be to move toward solar energy.

When asked about the idea of moving on to something larger where she might be able to share the load, Newton says that she and her husband, an Alaskan fishing boat captain, are happy living in southern Douglas County, and besides, Days Creek offers all the professional challenges she wants "and then some," she notes.



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PLEASE JOIN US NOW!

GOALS

- **COLLABORATIVE NETWORK:** OSSA will work with other professional education organizations for the improvement of education in Oregon's small schools.
- **EXCELLENCE:** OSSA will promote and celebrate excellence that is exhibited in small schools.
- **LEGISLATIVE ACTION:** OSSA will advocate for small schools' interest before the legislative assembly with an emphasis on school funding. OSSA employs Jim Green as our lobbyist.
- **PROVIDE ASSISTANCE:** OSSA will be a resource for advocating small schools to address instructional, curricular and operational tasks promoting their unique needs.
- **STAFF DEVELOPMENT:** OSSA will promote and facilitate excellence in education by providing staff development opportunities.



ACTIVITIES

- OSSA works with OSBA, COSA, ODE, ESDs, NWREL and other organizations that promote and support education.
- OSSA promotes adequate funding for small schools.
- OSSA works with NWREL, ODE and OSBA on specific provisions of the NCLB act that are particularly challenging for small, rural and remote schools in Oregon.

OSSA celebrates excellence in small schools by honoring an OSSA Teacher of the Year and Award of Excellence recipients for outstanding progress.

OSSA conducts regional workshops around the state with topics of interest to school personnel.

OSSA conducts special interest sessions at educational conferences.

OSSA publishes a newsletter Small Talk, sharing activities and successful practices.

OSSA pursues grants to assist financially with the association's professional development activities.

OSSA is a member of the National Rural Education Association (NREA) and advocates for small, rural school district's interest on federal educational issues.

ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP

K-12 Districts (ADM of 1650 or less).

ESD's are eligible to join.

Individual school: Individual schools from a non-member district can join as a school. This includes a small school within a larger district, private independent and charter schools. Individual school building population for elementary schools is limited to 60 ADM per grade level and high schools limited to 500 ADM with no voting rights for individual school memberships.

County School District: Schools within a county school district that meet the small schools membership criteria are eligible for membership and shall have voting rights.

To join OSSA,
or to request more information, please contact:

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