Whether you call it a seismic shift or a swinging of the pendulum, the popular interest in expansion and funding of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs is upon us. Measure 98 is the latest, but undoubtedly not the last, of the attempts we’ll see to refocus our work on job related skills and readiness. I think most of us would agree that a better balance between college-for-all and career skill building readiness was long overdue at the state level.

I was heartened recently to hear Salam Noor, head of the Oregon Department of Education, explain that now that NCLB is gone and ESSA had been adopted, the department would start reworking the school report card to focus on qualitative factors, not just progress on standardized testing. As we all know, creating a good school experience for students means exposure to art and music, opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, career and technical coursework, plus community support and involvement.

Of course, this is not to say we should abandon the use of standards and data. Our work needs to be both scientific AND creative. We are becoming increasingly aware of the effects of trauma and poverty

Teaching Character Traits Is All in a Day’s Work as a Teacher

By: Tessi Sims, OSSA 2017 Teacher of the Year

As educators, our desire is to prepare students to be successful for “life after school”. We undoubtedly have the responsibility to provide them comprehensive instruction in all core academic areas, but that is not all we need to be teaching them. As a mother of two grown children, a public school teacher for 22 years and the children’s ministry leader at my church I have been afforded plenty of opportunities to observe kids. It has become strikingly apparent to me that children are walking through our classroom doors with character trait deficiencies. These traits are necessary for them to become successful and happy members of our school family and, eventually, the larger community. In our 1st grade classroom, the most essential character trait is kindness. For us, kindness is defined as being friendly, generous and considerate. When children are both expected and given the tools to be kind they will choose kindness most often. Achieving this requires intentional instruction, consistent modeling and practice.

Teach Kindness

Students spend a good part of their day in our classrooms providing us with incredible opportunities to supply tools they
in preventing children from achieving their potential. But we also know that the influence of just one positive, supportive adult can and does make a difference. Helping every child learn – not just the smart ones, not just the clean ones, not just the compliant ones – is the job of everyone who works in education. We must embrace this as a calling, not just a career. We need to be creative in our methods, because every child is an individual with different circumstances and needs.

Small schools are poised to become a force in the state as leaders under ESSA. We can be more nimble, we can be more creative. What we may lack in resources, we make up for with attention to individual student needs and a desire to work together for the common good of our communities, counties and regions.

In the coming months, we’ll be reaching out to gather your stories and your experiences as we all leave the rigidity of NCLB behind and embrace a more balanced and well-rounded approach to public education, as well as a state and Oregon Department of Education that supports that goal.

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Character Traits... continued from pg 1

need to help become successful individuals. If we expect children to be kind, we must help them understand what kindness is and give them the tools to show it. They need opportunities to visit about what being kind looks like, sounds like and how it feels to receive and show kindness. When adults and children have a shared understanding of what it means to be kind, the students have no excuse. Teaching kindness or any of the many character traits must be intentional, relevant and creatively woven into all areas of the day.

**Model Kindness**

Children are stealthy little observers. Not much gets by them! We can use their tendency toward imitation as a means to change their behavior. Modeling kindness is the most powerful technique available for instilling kindness in children. When children observe strong values in those they trust and admire, they will yearn to imitate them. This starts with us. When children are shown kindness, love, empathy and acceptance they will be more likely to demonstrate the same to others. This can be as simple as meeting children at the classroom door each day with a warm greeting, hug and caring word to show them the kindness they deserve.

**Provide Opportunities to Show Kindness**

Proficiency requires practice. This is just as true when learning how to be kind. There are many opportunities throughout our school day to practice kindness. In our classroom, I make sure parent volunteers enter to 27 sweet little voices greeting them with a “hello” and leave with the same voices saying, “thank you.” When birthday snacks are handed out, children have been taught to look each other in the eyes when saying, “thank you” and “you’re welcome.” Hurt feelings at recess become a learning opportunity where the child calmly expresses his or her emotions as classmates help to problem solve a peaceful solution.

Reading, math and writing are important to learn at school, but learning character traits is as well. By teaching, modeling and practicing traits like kindness we hope to provide our students with a greater possibility of living a “life after school” full of successes in their families, communities and workplaces.
We are in the home stretch of the school year; these are the busiest times for schools! Staff, parents and students are stressed to the max. My school just finished the final SBAC math test this week.... thank goodness!

As I finish up the school year, I try to keep in mind some of the important lessons I've learned along the way:

- **Prioritize everything.** Delegate or put off those “important things” that don’t need to be done today. They will wait.

- **Slow down and have fun in your school/district.** Take time to enjoy the end of the year celebrations, traditions and this time of year. Although hectic, it is a fun time for schools. Enjoy it and be sure to be part of the fun.

- **Be direct, but gentle.** Be sure to not ignore what needs to be said even if it's at the end of the year. Things tend to fester or resurface if not taken care of the first time. Trust your gut, but remember that people (adults and students) do the very best they can for you. Coach them up -- it is even better if you can use your sense of humor to build the relationship when you address an issue.

- **Communicate with those around you.** Don’t assume people know what you want or need. A well-informed secretary can make your life so much easier by taking care of things and protecting your time.

- **Stay organized.** This time of year I have a “June” list and an “August” list going on my white board. I use magnets to post reminders, inservice week schedules, things I must make sure to do to keep me on track. Those lists don’t take the place of my weekly planner, but are another way to make sure I pay attention to the big things at the end and the beginning of my school contract.

It’s almost over! Happy summer break!

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**PLease JOIN US NOW!**

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<th>GOALS</th>
<th>ELIGIBILITY</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COLLABORATIVE NETWORK:</strong> OSSA will work with other professional education organizations for the improvement of education in Oregon's small schools.</td>
<td><strong>K-12 Districts</strong> (ADM of 1650 or less). ESD’s are eligible to join.</td>
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<td><strong>EXCELLENCE:</strong> OSSA will promote and celebrate excellence that is exhibited in small schools.</td>
<td><strong>Individual school:</strong> 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.</td>
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<td><strong>LEGISLATIVE ACTION:</strong> OSSA will advocate for small schools’ interest before the legislative assembly with an emphasis on school funding. OSSA employs Justin Martin as our lobbyist.</td>
<td><strong>County School District:</strong> Schools within a county school district that meet the small schools membership criteria are eligible for membership and shall have voting rights.</td>
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<td><strong>PROVIDE ASSISTANCE:</strong> OSSA will be a resource for advocating small schools to address instructional, curricular and operational tasks promoting their unique needs.</td>
<td>2001 S.W. Nye Ave. • Pendleton, OR 97801 Phone: 888-437-6892 • Fax: 541-276-4252 E-mail: <a href="mailto:edie.allstott@imesd.k12.or.us">edie.allstott@imesd.k12.or.us</a></td>
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<td><strong>STAFF DEVELOPMENT:</strong> OSSA will promote and facilitate excellence in education by providing staff development opportunities.</td>
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Legislative Update

By: Justin Martin, OSSA Lobbyist

It’s that time of the Oregon legislative session where things really begin to heat up! With the May Revenue Forecast coming out recently, the process for the “beginning of the end” is upon us. There are less than two months left in the 2017 session! While this is welcome news, we still have work to do.

For the past several sessions we have had to work to get sunset dates extended for two funding sources, the Small High School Grant and the small number of OSSA districts that rely on dormitories to house foreign exchange students. Fortunately, last session we were able to extend the Small High School Grant for five years so this session we are focused on the dormitories extension that was only given a two-year extension. As always, we are trying for a longer period if not an outright deletion of the sunset altogether.

I have had discussions about the issue with both co-chairs of the Ways & Means Committee and with key legislative proponents, including legislative leadership. It is important to know that these discussions don’t just focus on this issue, but the overall challenges that all our schools face throughout our organization and rural Oregon. It is imperative that we continue to tell the larger story of how we fit into the fabric of Oregon, and how our schools, employees, students, families and communities are impacted by decisions that the legislature makes in Salem.

All of our discussions have been positive, with legislators understanding the unique hurdles and difficulties that we face, while also realizing the value that we add throughout our great state. Of note is the fact that our urban legislators are very understanding and have worked hard in the past to make sure that we are getting what we need as an integral part of the entire education system. We are also working collaboratively to lend our voice and advocacy efforts alongside the rest of the education community for continuing to drive the overall budget number dedicated to K-12 funding in Oregon.

I am encouraged by these discussions and look forward to the next time I talk with you post-legislative session, having accomplished our legislative goals once again.

Heidi Sipe Wins Regional Leadership Award

Heidi Sipe, Superintendent of the Umatilla School District, was honored as the 2017 Doug Flatt Memorial Leadership Award recipient by the InterMountain ESD on Monday, May 15.

The award recognizes a school administrator who exemplifies qualities of leadership, attention to detail, service to community, interpersonal relationships and customer service. The award is sponsored by Mid Columbia Bus Company and the IMESD and presented to one administrator from Morrow, Umatilla or Union county.

Dr. Mark Mulvihill, IMESD Superintendent, said, “What makes Heidi unique as a Superintendent is she chose to stay in one community, serving a student population of great need. She has invested not only in the schools, but also the community.”

Sipe has been the Umatilla Superintendent since 2007 and was the 2015 Oregon Superintendent of the Year.
Small School Districts Pass School Bonds in May

OSSA would like to congratulate three of its member school districts on passing bond measures on May 16. Jefferson School District 14J ($14.4 million), North Powder School District 8J ($3 million) and Rogue River School District 35 ($3.335 million) were all successful in their endeavors.

In conversations with North Powder Superintendent Lance Dixon and Rogue River Superintendent Paul Young, each had some suggestions for a successful bond campaign.

Dixon said North Powder had been working on the bond for about a year, but doing facility evaluation and planning for at least five to six years. The two most important things to pass their bond were the bond information video produced by the InterMountain ESD for the district and the Political Action Committee (PAC). Dixon said the video was used extensively inside and outside the district, shown multiple times at facility tours, community open houses, civic group meetings and more, proving a great tool to start the bond conversation and explain it. He said the PAC’s door-to-door campaign, yard signs, presence at community events, phone calls and face-to-face conversations were crucial to success.

Superintendent Young said the most important thing for Rogue River was instead of the school board deciding what they wanted to fund, they gathered input from the community through formal surveys about what the community would pay for, and those were the chosen projects. Also important, Young said, was the expiration of their current bond and ensuring the new bond would keep taxes at the same exact rate. Their amount of $3.335 million accomplished this.

As for challenges, Young said dealing with misinformation about the bond was difficult – they heard comments like “it’s easy for the district to say this won’t increase our taxes, but you know it always does.” The district responded with clear, consistent messaging about the facts.

Dixon said the toughest part for North Powder was working through the long process of putting the plan together, encompassing facility evaluations, floor plans, engineering assessments, different ideas, meetings and many details. As for advice, Dixon said to start early and plan well, and to be honest, open and willing to admit what you don’t know. “Don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know the answer, don’t be afraid to ask questions and then provide the answer,” Dixon said.

Young said he would advise districts seeking bonds to remember that the smaller the district, the deeper the history in the community. “Citizens will remember things forever – whatever you promise, you better deliver.”

OSSA Mentoring

One of the goals of OSSA to is to provide members, especially new superintendents and administrators, an opportunity to receive mentorship from others who have been in the field for some time. At the winter conference in Salishan, we asked superintendents at the membership meeting to sign up for two or three areas of specialty; they would then mentor other superintendents seeking advice, ideas or perhaps just someone to bounce ideas off of.

If you would like to sign up to be a mentor, you’ll have the opportunity with our membership renewal form coming out in May/June. When you renew your membership, please consider volunteering to be a mentor to other superintendents on a specific topic you feel you are particularly good at navigating. This could be finance or discipline, community relations or fund-raising. Your professional experiences will be appreciated by others new to the field.

A complete list of administrative and superintendent mentors will be available this summer via your email inbox and through the OSSA website.

Thanks for giving back to the profession.
It is hard to believe that the 2016-17 school year is about to end. Whether this is your first year or 40th year in education, it is always amazing how fast the school year goes by and summer arrives. As school administrators, we know the work we do every day has a major impact on many individuals. Unfortunately, most of the time we never see the results of our efforts and hard work. As adults, we can look back and remember the educators who made a difference in our lives, reflecting on what they did for us. Some of us have made an effort to reconnect with that teacher, coach, staff member or administrator who impacted our life and to thank them, which is a great feeling. When this happens to us as leaders, we are often embarrassed or left speechless, but it means a great deal. Experiencing such a gesture of gratitude can remind us why we accepted our leadership role and why we do this difficult job.

As we end this school year and start to prepare for next year, it is important to remember that each of us truly does make a difference and we do make an impact on those we lead. We must also remember that we will not hear back from the vast majority of people we lead, serve and worked with. When we receive positive feedback from someone under our supervision/leadership, it can serve as a reminder that our job is worthwhile in spite of the many challenges, difficulties and no-win scenarios we face on a daily basis. It is important to remember that our efforts are not just for the present-day success of our school building/district, but also for the future growth and development of the individuals, community and organization we are charged with leading.

Leadership roles in school districts are becoming more and more complex, in direct proportion to the complexities in today’s society. As leaders, we operate in a world that requires us to be better prepared and skilled to address these complexities and unique challenges facing education. To keep up, educational leaders must make the time to reflect on current practice and make necessary adjustments to maximize productivity and success at all levels. We need to plan our work and make necessary adjustments to: limited resource allocation, staffing needs, professional development plans, facility management, vision and district goals, evaluation processes, student achievement, policy and procedures.

The summer months can be an effective time to think, plan and develop, along with colleagues and school board members, the year’s plan to increase our collective impact. Our efforts may result in an even greater impact locally and statewide in 2017-18. When June comes, I encourage you to make a conscious effort to start thinking strategically and begin planning your course of action. Your district’s students, community, colleagues, district staff, supervisors and school board will benefit from careful consideration of the future. Don’t wait until August to start this process – schedule time right after the last day of school while concerns, issues and problems are still fresh on everyone’s mind; identify them for future reflection, evaluation, modification and action. Start after school by reviewing district/building data and seek as much feedback as possible from staff before they leave for the summer break. Your efforts will serve as the blueprint later in the summer when your team gets back together to unwrap these issues and address them in action plans, goal statements, policy/procedure revisions, and vision statement modification and development.

Each of us has the potential to have a greater impact when we plan ahead and establish realistic, data-driven action plans.

The late Terry Pratchett in his 2015 book, “A Hat Full of Sky,” wrote “Why do you go away? So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colors.” Make the most of this much needed summertime, take a break and return refreshed, with new eyes and colors, ready to make an even greater impact as an educational leader in the 2017-18 school year. Thank you for being an educational leader in Oregon and for making a difference.
The Oregon Small Schools Association is proud to announce Amanda O’Brien as its 2017 Administrator of the Year.

O’Brien is the principal of Central Linn Elementary School in Halsey, Oregon, and has led the school for five years. When she arrived, the school had been identified as one of 61 Oregon Title 1 schools labeled as a “focus school”, meaning in the bottom 15 percent of Oregon schools based on the standards measured for ESSA. Nearly the entire state of Oregon (over 1,300 schools) were performing better than Central Linn Elementary.

According to Brian Gardner, superintendent of Central Linn School District, O’Brien’s response to hearing about the status of her new school was to exhale a sigh of relief and state there was nowhere to go except up! Committed to moving the school from the bottom to the top, she did just that, working to improve school culture, parent/community involvement, professional outreach and improving school-wide focus on rigor, learning standards and academic assessment.

“Amanda demonstrated a willingness to learn from the best practices of others and used collaborative efforts to gain powerful practices for her school,” said Gardner. “From staff to student to community, Amanda has resourced the best available people and brought them together for the school’s benefit and growth.”

Under O’Brien’s leadership, Central Linn Elementary School has risen to the 89th percentile in school rankings; when compared to similar schools demographically, Central Linn is in the top three percent of Oregon schools.

Jon Zwemke, principal of Central Linn Jr/Sr High School, said that elementary students now demonstrate school unity and an attitude of accomplishment and believe that achieving their learning goals is simply a matter of time. “Pride is more evident than ever. Amanda has kindled that spark and made her school one of the best in the entire state as a result,” said Zwemke.

The Central Linn School District’s purpose of “an individualized education for all learners” focuses on every child’s learning needs, driving every decision and ultimately benefiting every child, said Superintendent Gardner. “Amanda has led with this vision in her heart,” he said.

O’Brien said, “I am so very proud and honored to be named OSSA’s Administrator of the Year. This award wouldn’t be possible without the time, energy and overall commitment our Central Linn staff have shown over the last five years. When we focus on the individual learner and his/her needs, coupled with exemplary teachers, we achieve! The recognition is a validating bonus!”

-Amanda O’Brien
2017 Administrator of the Year

O’Brien will receive her award at the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) Conference at Seaside in June. OSSA recognizes one school administrator each year who excels in his/her leadership position. Criteria include integrity, leadership, commitment to community, scholarship and student achievement.
Umatilla Robotics TeamCompetes at World Finals

The Umatilla School District recently sent its robotics team to the FIRST Robotics Competition World Finals in Houston, Texas, to compete.

Umatilla took 48 of their 56 team members. Umatilla’s “Confidential” played on Carver with 66 other teams. Their robot, Dewey, performed well and they were selected to play in the Championships with the 5th ranking alliance. Their alliance partners for the Carver Championships were teams 1671 from Clovis, California, 1746 from Cumming, Georgia, and 1577 from Raanana HaMerkaz, Israel. Although they lost in the quarterfinals, Confidential was honored to make it to Championship play at the World Level for the first time in their six-year team history, and their fourth time at worlds.

“Going to Houston was so exciting, it’s an experience that I wouldn’t miss for the world. It really is amazing getting to meet people from all over the world knowing that you all have one thing in common; the love for FIRST and STEM,” said Madison Finck, Umatilla junior.

The Umatilla team is coached by lead mentor Kyle Sipe and assistant mentors Shawn Franks, Tess White, Caden Sipe and Heidi Sipe.

Thanks to generous support from the JPL Museum, team members enjoyed a trip to NASA’s Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center and a personal tour by Dr. Norman Chaffee. Chaffee is a veteran with over 50 years’ experience in the aerospace industry at the NASA Johnson Space Center, focused on the design, development, and operation of manned spacecraft and their systems.

“There were some really cool exhibits at the Space Center, and I got to be with my team members in a place that is so important both for history and engineering,” said Naomie Wyckoff, Umatilla freshman.

In the off-season, team Confidential will stay busy working to help start other FRC teams in the region, doing community service projects, fundraising and improving their skills.