

SMALL TALK

The Road Less Traveled



By
George Murdock
Executive Director

Summer break brings about a number of changes in the ranks of our superintendents. Just a short time ago, we wrote about the arrival of **Debbie Egan** in Lowell. Last spring, Debbie was recruited by the Lane ESD as its new superintendent. However, OSSA is delighted to have a new small school advocate in that key post. She will be replaced in Lowell by **Aaron Brown**.

Tom Crane, the popular superintendent at Pine Eagle, has left that position to become principal at Irrigon High School. Pine Eagle, meanwhile, has hired former Clatskanie Superintendent **Mike Corley** to step into the breach for 2006-07.

Other new arrivals include **Marc Thielman**, who is coming to Wallowa from St. John-Endicott, Wash.; **Linda Johnson**, who has taken over at Colton after serving in the Shoreline, Wash., schools; **Sue Horton**, who comes from Wyoming to Mitchell, and **Brian Wolf**, who is now the school chief at Huntington. **Raymon Smith**, a native of Klamath County, is the new superintendent at Arlington. **Dave Beasley**, who did a stint as the interim at Arlington last year, is now at Gaston.

Other new faces include **Edwin Serra** at Clatskanie, **Jeff Walker** at Crane, **Ken Cox** at Vernonia, and **Dale Coles**, back again at Sherman County.

There have also been plenty of changes on the south coast. Our old friend **Ruby Price** is now in charge at Port Orford-Langlois and **Jeff Davis** is the new superintendent at Central Curry. Jeff comes from Colton High School while Ruby has been a con-

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OSSA Teacher of the Year

gives students 'power of the pen'

September arrives as students and educators alike are saying farewell to their summer adventures. In the same breath as we say goodbye to summer, I truly believe that most students and teachers are excitedly awaiting the new nine month school adventure that is soon to be theirs to share together.

For those of us who teach in rural communities and small schools, the more "casual time" of summer allows us to see our students out in their yards, riding their bikes, playing in the park or on summer sports teams, at the neighborhood store, or interacting with their families.



OSSA Teacher of the Year Diane Griffin teaches at Garibaldi Grade School for the Neah-Kah-Nie District #56.

Being a member of the same close community that my students belong to is very important to me. It provides me with an insight into the lives of my students that gives me greater opportunities to help them with their particular learning, social, and emotional needs. I'm not teaching strangers; I'm educating students who are friends, neighbors and members of the same community I live and work in and understand so well. I feel it is my obligation as a teacher to consider all factors affecting and shaping the students I call "mine" each school year.

In fulfilling that obligation to my students perhaps my biggest focus at the very beginning of the year is to make clear to my students my classroom management plan. I feel it is so important to create a smooth, non-threatening, and comfortable classroom environment for all. A well laid out plan is the best insurance for creating a successful learning place.

To me, the best management system is clear and simple while taking very little time. My students learn this plan on the first day of

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The Road Less Traveled Continued

sultant following tenure as an elementary principal in Salem. **Kent Klewitz** has stepped in as superintendent at Myrtle Point.

Congratulations also to **Mary Apple** who was named superintendent of the Union-Baker ESD. Mary is a long-time friend of small schools who has worked very closely with the OSSA members in her area.

As some of you are aware, we have changed the format for the Small Schools Summit during Legislative years. Thanks to our friends at COSA and OSBA, we will combine the Summit with the Legislative Conference held by those two organizations in Salem. We are hopeful this will result in having more small school folks visiting the Legislature and provide more opportunity for the OSSA lobbyist and legislative committee to meet and work with OSSA members while the Legislature is in session. It never hurts for local legislators to see their constituents in the capitol and rural schools are sometimes at a disadvantage in that regard. The COSA-OSBA event is scheduled for Feb. 18-19.

Be sure to note that there has been a change in the conference program at OSBA. The Small School Breakfast, normally held on Sunday morning, has been changed to Saturday. This is in response to feedback from conference attendees. Vendors will be present on Thursday afternoon and Friday, which is also a change.

We are grateful to last year's teacher of the year, **Carol Kilpatrick**, who, in addition to being our honoree, also was willing to go out and provide workshops for interested schools. This was a new twist for the teacher of the year and those schools that took advantage were well-pleased.

Our featured culinary tip for this issue is the K&R Drive-In at Rice Hill, just off I-5. As usual, ambiance and décor aren't the primary reasons why this establishment was chosen for special attention. Instead, it would be the Umpqua ice cream available in multiple flavors, along with unusually good cheeseburgers. In addition, the K&R has a long-standing reputation for hiring students from Oakland, Yoncalla, and North Douglas high schools, including work study students. The K&R is moderately famous as a frequent stop for former OSSA President **Dan Forbess**, who now splits his time between North Douglas and Oakland.

(As usual, we gladly accept nominations from our readers although the editorial staff reserves the right to personally inspect the nominee and sample the fare).



OSSA Board Meeting

The Oregon Small Schools Association held its October meeting via video conference, although several members gathered at central sites for the event. This is the second time video-conferencing has been used for a board meeting.

During the meeting, President-elect Newell Cleaver introduced Ione Superintendent Bryn Browning, the new member of the Board representing Region Five. Cleaver also noted that Jeff Davis, superintendent at Central Curry School District, will join the Legislative Committee. Tami Peterson provided a report on the Summer Institute and Beth O'Hanlon gave a financial report. OSSA will discuss a potential shared Summer Institute with WOU at the suggestion of Dr. Hilda Rosselli, an ex-officio member of the board. Legislative Chair Peter Tarzian reviewed the legislative agenda and blueprint and said the documents would be reviewed in-depth at the November meeting.

Membership in OSSA is up from this time a year ago. The group appointed a nominating committee and Teacher of the Year committee. The nominating committee will be chaired by Rick Pass with Brad Yates and John Widenoja as members. The Teacher of the Year Committee will include Dr. Hilda Rosselli, John Widenoja, and Bryn Browning. It was pointed out that the Small Schools Breakfast — held during the OSBA Convention — will be on Saturday this year instead of Sunday. The featured speaker will be Teacher of the Year Diane Griffin. Entertainment for the breakfast is being arranged by Bryn Browning.

Small Talk

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Widenoja expresses concern

OSSA President John Widenoja has expressed concern over a plan to allow districts that pass special funding measures to avoid subtracting those revenues from their SSF.

“Such a plan flies in the face of equity in education for Oregon students since poor areas will not be able to raise taxes while rich areas could probably do so,” Widenoja said.

“At a conference a few years ago, I heard a state representative explaining that they don’t provide more money for K-12 education because local school districts can already do that by passing a local option if the voters so choose,” the president added. “If this becomes law, it would further take legislators off the hook for funding schools.

“I know that the membership of OSSA is on both sides of the issue in terms of whether or not districts should be able to raise local funds without penalty,” Widenoja concluded. “For myself, I believe that many of the members of OSSA represent small, rural communities, many of which are struggling economically. This is where it will be the most difficult to pass local taxing measures. For that reason, I don’t think this movement is good for our schools and encourage all OSSA members to look carefully at this issue.”

OSSA Teacher of the Year Continued.

school. I have just five simple classroom guidelines for all students to follow. These classroom guidelines pretty well cover every student behavior and attitude imaginable. My secret ingredient to insure the success of the management plan is the “POWER PEN.”

Each summer I have fun acquiring an inspirational or attention getting pen. I introduce my students to the “POWER PEN” on the first day. Quite simply, when a student does not follow one of the five guidelines, the “POWER PEN” comes to them, via my hand, and silently puts a small checkmark and the date on the student’s “3X5 KEEPING ON TRACK CARD” taped to their desktop. That’s a warning. No words are exchanged between the student and me.

Almost without fail, students immediately correct the behavior with no embarrassment or anger. If the student makes the choice not to correct the behavior, they have already been taught the clear consequences of their choice, again with no need to exchange any words. I have used this for over 30 years with all the intermediate grades with great success.

It is mid-August as I write this, but that good old “beginning of the year excitement” is upon me. I hope your enthusiasm and excitement are on the rise as you begin another year of great possibilities. Have a wonderful year! Enjoy your students!

- Diane Griffin

John Day administrators work together



JOHN DAY administrators were captured during the regular administrators meeting. Left to right Adel Cerny, head teacher at Seneca Elementary; Kris Beal, principal at Humboldt; and Monte Nash principal at Mt. Vernon Middle School. (Apologies to Special Education Director Gail Enright, who somehow didn't get into the photo.)



From left to right are Superintendent Newell Cleaver, High School Principal Mark Witty, and High School Dean of Students Matt Henry. (The Small Talk editor attended the meeting but mostly stopped by to fill his coffee cup on a trip from Lakeview to Pendleton).

New Port Orford-Langlois superintendent finds busy schedule worthwhile

When George Murdock, OSSA executive director, asked me to send to him my impressions of my first months at Port Orford-Langlois School District as its new superintendent, I was honored and delighted to do so. After all, having the privilege to serve in this position is the culmination of a career spent in both public and private education. When I asked him for the time line for the submission of a draft of the article and George indicated a two-week window, again no problem. I thought that I would just sit down and write my impressions when things were quiet in the district office and there was a lull at the high school, where I am also serving as Principal. After several weeks, I realized that the only quiet time for thoughtful writing of articles is between midnight and 5 a.m. This will come as no surprise to many of our readers.



The dynamics of the converging diverse personalities of the community, the teachers, the board, and the students is in constant flux. I find that there are no two days that are the same. Boredom is not an option. Sometimes I laugh, sometimes I throw up my hands in dismay and sometimes I do a happy dance. Some days it feels like the circus and I am the ringmaster, and other times it feels like a prison, but I can't decide if I am the inmate or the warden. I am impressed with the professionalism and pride of most of my teachers; yet sometimes they can be more childish than the students. Tempers flare, turf wars ensue, and sometimes I even have to put a stop to the name calling. But it reminds me that often the reason there is such a range of emotions is because each of these teachers is deeply invested in the success of the students through the particular lenses of their subject areas.

I am impressed daily with the dedication it takes to be on the school board. These are citizen heroes. They serve without pay. They get little or no recognition when they get it right. And they are the target of anger and disdain if per chance they might make a decision that is wrong in someone's opinion. Nevertheless, they meet often late into the night and strive with sacrificial diligence to ensure the success of the students and my success as a new superintendent. I have also been surprised at how much of my energy and time can be spent engaged in matters that are not directly related to academic pursuits, from transportation to janitorial issues, from food service to maintenance, from union disputes to the advertising of position vacancies.

When I realize that this is my first month with students in a relatively small district, I am impressed with those who have gone before, in both small and large districts. I realize that every superintendency is different, yet each has common threads that intertwine to make a school district the unique challenge that it is. I am forced to ask myself, "Am I up to this challenge and is it worth it?" Yet I thrive on the challenge and find myself increasingly committed to the success of this little district that I had to look up on an atlas as I completed my application last spring. I find myself blessed to be embraced by a community so quickly. I know that I am still in the honeymoon period, but I am convinced this community and I are linked together in the common pursuit of excellence in education.

Is it worth all the years of schooling, the struggle to obtain a superintendent's license, to be on call 24/7? Without hesitation, I say yes and would encourage any aspiring superintendents to stay the course and wait for the right position as I did ... for your time in the sun!

- Ruby Price

Places & Faces



OSSA staff & volunteers' minds were hard at work during an Educator Institute brainstorming session. From left are Robert Valiant, Kelli Kinkead, Tami Peterson, Donna Hamor, Clark Hamor, & Bridget Verstoppen.



South Wasco Superintendent Dennis Hickey is now in his second year after coming to the district from Yamhill-Carlton. Here he's with veteran Business Manager Charlotte Hawkins.

Lakeview superintendent to step down in June

Lakeview Superintendent Judy Graham plans to leave her position as superintendent of the Lakeview School District at the end of June. But what might be even more interesting is the unique path she took to get there in the first place.

Graham first got into education as a business education teacher at Gold Beach High School. A year later, she moved to Brookings-Harbor High School. From 1969-74 she substituted in Crook County and then spent 1975-77 as school district clerk in Darrington, Wash., as her husband moved with the U.S. Forest Service. As one might expect, that usually meant very rural areas.

From 1977-79 she substituted in the Prospect and Mill City School Districts, and from 1979-80 she was an 8th grade teacher at Prospect. A year later she became head teacher and the business education teacher at Prospect.

When the family moved to Grant County in 1986, jobs were hard to find but at last the possibility of position opened up in a small district. Unfortunately, the proposed teaching assignment didn't mesh with her training.

As luck would have it, the superintendent in Mt. Vernon at the time became aware that Graham was looking for a job and convinced her to become district business manager. The district merged with John Day shortly thereafter and she went to work in John Day.

When her husband was transferred to Lakeview to take over as forest supervisor of the Fremont/Winema National Forests, she became business manager at the Lake County ESD.

Lakeview Superintendent Howard Ottman noticed Graham at the ESD and a year later talked her into becoming athletic director and dean at the high school. Before she knew it, he had her involved in getting an administrative license. Four years later she became principal of Lakeview High

School — a position she held for three years. When Ottman decided to retire, he told her she would be an ideal replacement as district superintendent, a position she has now held for the past eight years.

As Graham reflects back over her tenure in Lakeview, she notes that the district staff was a little slow to embrace the latest round of education mandates wondering if they, like so many mandates before them, would eventually pass. But despite the slow start, things have moved quickly since.

Lakeview's schools now meet AYP in every category and every sub-group. But as she celebrates the academic achievements, Graham also longs for the return of some key positions that have become victims of Oregon's funding crisis — like the district librarian and a number of specialists.

Enrollment is leveling out in the district and it's

been able to make some headway with technology. On the other hand, the superintendent also worries about the district's need to have more resources for maintenance beyond the "absolutely necessary."

During her tenure, Graham said Lakeview has enjoyed a good relationship with the smaller districts in Lake County. Both Adel and Plush send their high school students to Lakeview.

Graham is also proud of the fact that she was able to add both baseball and softball to the district athletic program.

Her husband has now retired from the Forest Service but they plan to remain in Lakeview where one of their sons is a doctor.

He and his wife have three children. Another son lives with his wife and two children in Prineville where he owns a construction business.



Lakeview superintendent, Judy Graham, second from right, will step down in June after eight years at the helm. Here she is seen with four of her five board members. From left to right are Tege Phillips-Hotchkiss, Greg Larson, Bob Squires (standing), Graham, and Shirin Sabin.

Wyoming administrator takes over at Mitchell

Sue Horton came to Mitchell knowing that she had big shoes to fill. After all, Mike Carroll had been at the school almost as long as anyone could remember.

But the new superintendent/principal brings a wealth of experience to her job and she has attacked the new challenge with energy and enthusiasm.

Horton arrived at Mitchell from Douglas, Wyoming where she was also a school administrator. And before that, she was in Juneau, Alaska where she served as an elementary principal at a time when former Oregonian Elaine Hobson was the assistant superintendent.

Hobson finished her career in Oregon as superintendent at Tillamook and then served in the Oregon Legislature.

Despite her background in Alaska and Wyoming, and the fact that she grew upon on a sheep ranch in Northern California, the new superintendent also has roots in Oregon. Her father now operates a sheep ranch near Oakland, Ore., and she has aunts and uncles in the Lakeview and Bonanza areas. (For small school readers in those areas, that would be the Grothe and Hamerich families.)

At Mitchell, Horton has 63 students, up three from last May. There are some residents moving to Mitchell, but because of jobs and the economy, they are mostly retirees. Besides, housing is limited.

However, on Oct. 7, the community came together for a renovation party to update and modernize the gymnasium. This project was designed to both enhance the gym and help create a greater sense of community.

Looking back on her first few months in Mitchell, Horton says she is grateful for a supportive and helpful board that has established priorities and helped provide clarity in the direction the district needs to go.

Although finances continue to be a challenge, the leadership group is looking at different ways to utilize the resources. In addition, the staff is utilizing technology to help avoid extensive travel.



SUE HORTON, right, new superintendent/principal at Mitchell, is shown in the school kitchen with Cook Corina Espinoza.

Conference Alert!

**2006 Annual OSBA Convention:
Turning Passion into Possibilities**
Nov. 9-12 -- Portland
<http://www.osba.org/leadrshp/ac/index.htm>

Leadership Oregon 2007
Become a better leader
<http://www.osba.org/leadrshp/lo/index.htm>

Performance Management Workshop
Oct. 26 -- Medford
Southern Oregon ESD
<http://www.osba.org/lrelatns/perfmgmt/index.htm>

Summer Institute
June 18-21, 2007 -- Pendleton
Umatilla-Morrow ESD

Distance education helps keep Spray curriculum diverse

Spray Superintendent/Principal Paul Young gets excited when he begins talking about what a difference expanded distance education options have made for his students in this small Wheeler County school district.

Using a program out of Brigham Young University, the district has been able to augment the work of its faculty with additional offerings that simply wouldn't be practical with both limited staff and students. Young said they have students involved in German, business law, clothing design, medieval history, expanded English courses, the history of ancient civilizations, and psychology.

Spray remodeled its media center to integrate with the library so the staff member overseeing the library can also work with students taking distance education classes. Young says that all students get a chance to take a distance education class of their choice. If they are successful, they can take more during their junior and senior years.

"Distance education is a real key in helping level the playing field for our students," the superintendent said.

The expanded array of distance education classes aren't the only thing new at Spray. Two years ago, the woodshop burned and this year Spray has unveiled an impressive new replacement. Teacher Connie Knapp is proud of the new facility, which includes brand new, state-of-the-art equipment.



Spray superintendent/Principal Paul Young works with student Trevor Humphreys who is building a hovercraft as part of an advanced project this year. Humphreys plans to launch his project in the John Day River as early as April.

Spray has also added a new program for secondary students which permits them to work on advanced projects. One student is building a Hovercraft, one is building a recording studio, and two others are restoring automobiles. A math-science teacher at Spray, who was once an engineer, provides the guidance necessary for such ambitious efforts.

As is common in this part of Oregon, the enrollment at Spray is declining slowly each year, although the district has been able to attract a few new families. Employment opportunities in the community remain the impediment to widespread growth.



Connie Knapp, woodshop teacher in Spray, poses in the new woodshop that has just been completed. The previous shop burned two years ago.

Children's Rodeo

Sponsored by the Umatilla-Morrow ESD

The UMESED and the Pendleton Round-Up Association sponsor this event each year during the Round-Up in September to give special needs children the chance to be rodeo stars. The children featured here are all from OSSA member schools.



Alex Victorio of Heppner demonstrates how to Let'er Buck while riding the hand-rocked bull during the Children's Rodeo.



Braden Linnell of Heppner receives tips from his cowboy on how to best rope a steer.



Ashton Marks of Helix cowboys up during the Children's Rodeo.



Emily Springer of Prairie City flashes a huge smile.



Hannah Flynn of Ione takes a breather in between activities.



Zac Evans of Echo shows the steer who's boss. Zac's entire school came to cheer him on.