

## OSBA Events

### *OSBA Board of Directors Meeting*

June 21-23, 2013

### *Summer Board Conference*

July 19-21, 2013

## Rep. Shemia Fagan keeps giving back to Oregon schools

Rep. Shemia Fagan (D-Clackamas) knows firsthand how great schools often lead to great things.

Raised by a single dad in an impoverished household, Fagan coped by acting out in elementary school. The turning point came in fourth grade when a Dufur teacher invited her to join the chess club; she ended up winning the state championship.



Rep. Shemia Fagan

"If I had only been disciplined for my actions I don't think I'd be an attorney today," she said. "I might need an attorney, but I definitely wouldn't be one. I owe my career to Oregon public schools, and I'm grateful for the experiences there that made me realize that I can compete with anyone."

Fagan, 31, has ridden a whirlwind over the last four years, going from law school graduate (Lewis and Clark, 2009) to practicing attorney to school board member (David Douglas, May 2011) to state representative (House District 51, November 2012).

In the midst of all that she also had her first child, Alton, now nine months old.

"I had him two months before the (state representative) election, and had to go back and finish the campaign," Fagan said. "Now I get to go home and hold 25 pounds of nothing but love, which helps remind me why I'm doing this."

Fagan is one of only two state legislators who are concurrently serving on local school boards. The other is Rep. Mark Johnson (R-Hood River).

The two most prominent themes on Fagan's campaign website are "Creating jobs" and "Strengthening our schools." Just as OSBA is doing in promoting our *Strong Schools, Strong State* campaign, Fagan sees the two issues as intertwined.

"It's hard to separate them," she said. "The stronger our schools are, the more employers want to locate here. For us to have a sustainable economy, it's critical that our schools create students ready to compete in the world."

For some students – she uses her two brothers as an example – that means offering vocational classes that lead directly to job skills. She also describes herself as a supporter of smaller class sizes, robust programs and neighborhood schools. Oregon desperately needs a stable source of school funding, she said.

Having seen the challenges of changing demographics at David Douglas, Fagan says schools also need the freedom to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. About 80 percent of the district's students qualify for reduced-cost lunches, and one in four speaks a different language at home.

"Local control is important so that board members can make decisions that work for their community," she said. "Here in the Legislature we have to avoid the temptation to function as super school board, because what works for Beaverton might not work for Wasco County."

In some ways, she said, Oregon needs to get back to the basics in education.

"We don't have to chase every shiny new program out there," she said. "When good teachers connect with students, they will have an impact on their lives."

### President's Post

## Momentum keeps building as OSBA tackles vital member issues

As we approach our June OSBA Board meeting and the chance to refine our goals for the coming year, this is a great time to reflect on just how far we've advanced over the last 12 months.

In 2012, OSBA's two largest members, the Portland Public Schools Board and the Salem-Keizer School Board, which had dropped their memberships in 2011, rejoined the association. Once more united, the

association mounted an impressive **Strong Schools, Strong State** campaign during the 2013 legislative session, linking strong schools to a strong state economy, and energizing member advocacy around a significant state investment to support student achievement. OSBA led a coalition of eight statewide education advocacy groups in this effort; together, OSBA and its partners provided districts statewide with resources to tell their local achievement success and state funding impact stories. School boards throughout the state adopted resolutions supporting the campaign and advocated with their legislators and the governor to support it as well. The result was a K-12 schools budget that is at least \$1 billion more than it was in the last biennium.



Terry Lenchitsky  
OSBA President

OSBA also took the legislative lead in 2013 in advocating for reducing the overall cost of the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System (PERS), while providing a stable and adequate retirement benefit for public employees. OSBA worked with legislators to draft multiple pension reform concepts, and our Senate Bill 754 was often cited during the session as the benchmark for significant PERS reform. Our legislative staff was closely involved in negotiations as the two parties reached for a way to find more PERS reforms and revenue sources. Just as we did in our **Strong Schools, Strong State** campaign, OSBA worked with a coalition of groups to leverage our position as education leaders with the influence of other organizations. The “We Can Fix PERS Now Coalition” established a new website packed with information on the need for reform, and our OSBA communications staff collaborated on a number of op-ed pieces and provided information for numerous news articles on PERS. OSBA Board members and local board members also joined with OSBA staff to do a series of editorial board visits on funding and pension reform. Through those efforts, the association emerged as the leading voice on pension reform in the 2013 legislative session.

Our efforts did not go unnoticed by the media and public. For example, an article in the *Statesman Journal* noted that OSBA had emerged in 2013 as “re-energized and re-focused under the leadership of its board and its new executive director, Betsy Miller-Jones.” Betsy was selected as executive director this January after a nationwide search. She continued her focus on member service with regular attendance at local school board meetings to listen to member issues and concerns.

OSBA leadership placed the association on firm financial footing in 2013, implementing a new investment policy and financial management practices that moved the operating budget to a strong upward trend, while retaining valuable services and stable rates to members.

The association sponsored two new conferences this year aimed at better serving its members. For the first one, OSBA partnered with the Special Districts Association of Oregon, with which it provides the Property

and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) program, for a day-long conference focused on school safety. John-Michael Keyes of the “I Love U You Guys” Foundation was the keynote speaker. He urged school districts to adopt a standard protocol of preparation and response to school safety incidents.

At Urban Issues Day, OSBA brought together members from the state’s largest districts to discuss common issues and challenges. Dr. Doris McEwen, the Oregon Education Investment Board’s deputy director for curriculum and instruction, presented a moving presentation on racial equality and closing the achievement gap.

OSBA’s annual summer conference theme is **LEAD**, which stands for “Listen, Engage, Advocate, Dream.” This theme symbolizes OSBA’s vision and the work that lies ahead for educational leaders in Oregon. Our featured speaker will be Dr. James Johnson, director of the Urban Strategies Center at the University of North Carolina. Dr. Johnson is an expert in community and economic development, the effects of demographic changes on the U.S. workplace, inter-ethnic minority conflict in advanced industrial societies, urban poverty and workforce diversity. He will examine the causes and consequences of growing inequality as it affects socially and economically disadvantaged youth. His presentations will prove especially valuable to board members as they grapple with the achievement gap and the critical need to raise students’ performance overall.

Speakers for the November annual convention in Portland will include David Warlick on technology issues, Dr. Doris McEwen on equity and the achievement gap, Paul Tough on “The Hidden Power of Character,” and Jan McInnis on “Finding the Funny in Change.”

Now that we’ve built up this much momentum, it’s exciting to think about how much more we can accomplish together this year and beyond.

Keeping You in the Loop

## McEwen inspires others at Urban Issues Day

Dr. Doris McEwen has a gift for irritating people. Thank goodness for that.

McEwen, the Oregon Education Investment Board’s deputy director of curriculum and instruction, spoke to about two dozen of us last month at OSBA’s first Urban Issues Day. Her message on equity, closing the achievement gap and believing in children was inspiring. And timely. And, as she hoped, irritating.

“It’s from irritation that beautiful things happen,” she told us. “Just ask the oyster.”

That lesson can be applied equally well to our transformation here at OSBA. We’ve emerged from some choppy times



Betsy Miller-Jones  
Executive Director

stronger and more nimble than ever, with a rededicated purpose to our members' needs. That's why we envisioned a day devoted to the particular needs of larger districts, and why we plan to offer something similar soon focused on topics of concern to districts with other common interests. Rural? Declining enrollment? Changing demographics? Yes, we can share ideas related to all of the above.



Dr. Doris McEwen, Oregon Education Investment Board's deputy director for curriculum and instruction, speaks to attendees about racial equity and closing the achievement gap at Urban Issues Day in Salem on May 10. Seated at table to left is Rob Saxton, the state's deputy superintendent of public instruction.

McEwen was one of several speakers, and she drew from decades of personal experience, including obstacles she faced as a student. Other speakers helped define characteristics of effective school leaders and outlined community resources, and we concluded by prioritizing urban school needs and how OSBA can help address them.

Urban issues are really kid issues, McEwen said, "and they're issues we haven't yet come to grips with, because if we had we would not still have an achievement gap."

She described our moral imperative to educate each child, and read a moving poem called "You Don't Live on My Street" (A fragment: And how was I supposed to concentrate?/When I can't remember the last time I ate/Do



Dr. Doris McEwen, Oregon Education Investment Board's deputy director for curriculum and instruction, speaks to Urban Issues Day attendees about racial equity and closing the achievement gap.

you live every day with defeat?/Then you don't even live on MY street).

"Your daily question must be, 'How have I helped a student excel?'" she said. "How is your decision affecting students?"

McEwen outlined four elements of willpower necessary for reinventing our schools.

- Social will: Buying into and modeling the belief system that each and every child can succeed.
- Cultural will: Understanding the children in your district, where and how they live and the challenges facing them and their parents.
- Organizational will: Structuring the organization so it serves your students, and hiring teachers that reflect your student demographics and speak their languages.
- Political will: Having the courage to stand for what's right and to not settle for less.

Later, Tom Alsbury, a Seattle Pacific University professor of educational leadership, talked about the political realities boards face in districts where demographics, beliefs and values are changing rapidly. Long-stable board superintendent teams frequently do not see the changes, or take their impact seriously, until political forces overtake them. Alsbury has studied the patterns, and he offered attendees suggestions on how we can be more aware and responsive to changes in our communities.

Duncan Wyse, president of the Oregon Business Council, and Larry Whittlesey, executive director of the School Partnership Network, spoke at lunch about their community partnerships with school districts. More and more districts, particularly those in high-density urban environments, work with faith-based organizations, non-profit service providers and businesses to successfully address the needs of students and their families.

Arty Trost led board members in a priority discussion that started with these three questions: 1. What are you doing? 2. What are your goals? 3. How can OSBA help?

Board members identified a laundry list of issues, from enrollment to communication to student mobility to declining enrollment and school closures.



Betsy Miller-Jones, OSBA's executive director, prepares to introduce Dr. Doris McEwen, Oregon Education Investment Board's deputy director for curriculum and instruction, at Urban Issues Day in Salem on May 10.

As we move forward, some of the resources we must tap to be successful are the good practices we have experienced as board members. Sharing common concerns, and workable solutions, is one way we can build on our knowledge to improve student achievement in Oregon. What is it that YOU would like to share, and hear about from fellow board members? Are there state-level leaders or other educational authorities you would like to meet to discuss issues facing your community?

We have a wealth of knowledge and experience with educational leadership in Oregon – the challenges as well as solutions. Let's share what we know! Let me know what you would like to see OSBA sponsor as an in-depth topic of conversation, and we can get the ball rolling, together.



Rob Saxton, Oregon's deputy superintendent of public instruction, spoke to OSBA field staff in Salem on May 13. Saxton described the education department's efforts to change from being a compliance agency to being an active force to close the achievement gap, reaching out to younger learners and stemming dropout rates. "If I could do anything," he said, "I would have one big curriculum department."

## McMinnville's Primozich joins OSBA Board

Stanley Primozich's official job title is financial professional emeritus, but off the clock he's all about youth.



Stan Primozich

From coaching football to founding a neighborhood school association to heading the PTA, Primozich has dedicated countless hours to young people. The personal ties to youth keep growing: his seven children have accounted for 13 grandchildren.

In March, Primozich officially joined OSBA's board, representing Yamhill and Polk counties. The full-time financial advisor has served more than 20 years on the McMinnville School Board – long enough to have handed his three youngest children their diploma at high school graduation.

"I've never really had an agenda," he says. "There are certain things I've encouraged, but my agenda is what's best for kids.

"When you have as many children as I do in the system, you are naturally concerned about the way things are. I had a lot of ideas and I thought I could either sit around and complain about things or do something."

Primozich says every child deserves an equal shot at a high-quality public education, and that schools should balance the values of academics and athletics.

"I see a baseball diamond or a football field as a classroom in their own way," he said.

Among his proudest accomplishments on the McMinnville board is supporting a program that allows high school students to earn college credits.

"When you walk across that stage at graduation and already have a dozen college credits, the chances go way up that you are going to continue your education," he said.

On the OSBA Board, he wants to help school boards establish a more cohesive voice on contract negotiations with employees.

"I think OSBA can be a big help in negotiating contracts that keep teachers in the classroom," he said.

## PACE trustees adopt language strengthening coverage document

It wasn't that long ago that lawyer Andy Lauersdorf represented a client suing the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO).

After that case ended, SDAO reached out to Lauersdorf about the language in the property coverage document for PACE that is jointly administered by SDAO and OSBA through the Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) Trust. Like a coach who has studied the other team's playbook, he thought he could help improve PACE's game plan.

His presentation was one of several orders of business when PACE trustees met May 6 in Salem.

Lauersdorf suggested language changes in five areas governing coverage: emphasizing mitigation in the event of a loss, clarifying scope and conditions of appraisal, clarifying covered professional services, clarifying coverage in case of construction delays, and revising language in cases in which faulty workmanship or materials have been used in repairs or construction.

Trustees unanimously approved the first four changes, but asked for more work to be done in the area of the faulty materials or workmanship.

Lauersdorf also proposed adding a stated values clause on coverage documents, which may read: "The members and the Trust would agree upon the value of the buildings or specific pieces of property and that value would be the maximum paid out in the event of a loss. If a

loss occurs, the agreed properties stated value would be the limit of the indemnity.”

That change was also approved unanimously. The changes take effect for the next policy renewal.

Mike Doherty, SDAO’s chief financial officer, said districts would be seeing rate increases ranging from 11 to 30 percent in their renewals, and that the average rate would be 17 percent. The size of the rate increase is primarily based on claims history, he said.

Significant increases in liability claims such as employment and sexual abuse against PACE and widespread insurance losses worldwide are driving rates upward.

## OSBA offers school-safety drill training recommendations

OSBA encourages members to develop comprehensive school safety plans that address prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. In light of recent media reports, OSBA offers members these general guidelines on safety drills:

- Communicate often and openly with parents, students, teachers and other staff before conducting simulation drills.
- Design drills that are thoughtful, provide opportunities for teachable moments and avoid scenarios that could traumatize the participants. Build plans from successful models.
- Work closely with local law enforcement agencies.
- Adopt and practice standard responses to emergency situations. In the wake of recent acts of school violence, a number of organizations have developed guidelines that districts can draw upon. Among them are the Standard Response Protocol by the I Love U Guys Foundation (<http://iloveguys.org/srp.html>), a National School Boards Association webinar on planning for and managing a crisis ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4qDyOL5F\\_I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4qDyOL5F_I)), a resources page of the Oregon School Safety Officers Association (<http://www.ossoa.org/disasterresources>), and crisis response planning by the Crisis Management Institute ([www.cmionline.com](http://www.cmionline.com)).

“School safety is a paramount concern for us,” said Betsy Miller-Jones, OSBA’s executive director. “We’re working to ensure that individual districts can adopt those measures appropriate for local communities.”

Recently, the Board of Trustees for Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) approved changes in liability coverage for districts that contract with armed personnel. Charges of up to \$2,500 per armed person may apply, and any district contracting with individuals not certified by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training will be excluded from coverage.



## Summer board conference coming up in Bend

Board members from across the state representing K-12 school districts, community colleges, education service districts and charter schools will gather in Bend at the Riverhouse Hotel and Convention Center July 19-21 for OSBA’s Summer Board pre-conference and conference.

This year’s agenda is packed with up-to-the-minute information on school funding, legislative activities, and a myriad of other exciting topics such as school law, cyber-bullying, campus safety, board member ethics and student achievement. New this year will be an opening reception at 4:30 p.m. Friday, July 19, hosted by a select group of vendors.

The pre-conference will include an all-day board secretary workshop as well as two pre-conference choices for school board members and superintendents. Find registration, lodging and event details here ([http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Summer\\_board\\_conference-2013.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Summer_board_conference-2013.aspx))

Plan your trip well in advance. We look forward to seeing you in Bend in July!