

May 2014

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OSBA Events

2014 Spring PACE Trainings

May 6, 2014 - June 12, 2014

NSBA Pacific Region Summer Meeting

June 27-29, 2014

Summer Board Conference

July 18-20, 2014

PACE welcomes 150 attendees to annual safety event in Eugene

Of all that was said and shown at the “PACE Day: Safe and Secure Schools” event April 25 in Eugene, perhaps the most sobering was a brief video.

In it, the sexually related school claims of the past couple of decades were overlaid against a map of the state, year by year. The images demonstrated the accelerated pace of such claims in recent years, as well as how the problem exists statewide.

By the video’s conclusion, a hush had fallen over the crowd of 150 at the Hilton Eugene.



Adam Stewart, PACE Board of Trustees chair and Hillsboro SD chief financial officer, welcomes attendees to PACE Day.

The power of the video’s imagery helped introduce the importance of the message from keynote speakers Glenn Scott Lipson and Daniel Shinoff. Lipson is a clinical psychologist and professor who has developed an online training program to prevent sexual misconduct; Shinoff is an attorney who defends school districts in lawsuits.

Their session, “Dealing with Students, Boundary



Attendees listen to a presentation at the second annual PACE Day.

Issues and Professional Ethics for Educators,” was a timely one for the second annual PACE Day. Boundary issues and sexual grooming have led to a number of six-figure legal settlements against Oregon districts in recent years, and because PACE (which stands for Property and Casualty Coverage for Education) is a pool, rates for all members are affected by judgments against individual districts.

“You are members, but you are owners of this program as well,” noted Lisa Freiley, OSBA’s director of labor and PACE services.

The issue is so vital that attendees received a newly created Boundary Invasion Toolkit, designed to prevent and identify sexual contact between school employees and students. It contains sample policies, legal issues, reporting requirements, questions and answers, prevention tools and a reference guide.

“Participation of your key staff is vital to making this work,” said Geoff Sinclair, PACE’s director of claims services.

Shinoff and Lipson provided details from several of the cases they have encountered, and Lipson noted that “this has become a hot area of litigation ... the average jury verdict in California is \$5.9 million.”

Lipson said the accused in such cases cross gender and racial lines, and Shinoff said perpetrators of school-related sexual crimes “tend to be the most popular ones on campus; they are grooming the kids, but they are grooming the adults as well.”

They showed a video of a tearful student victim’s statement to a school staff member who had engaged in a sexual relationship with her. “Will these rumors always follow me?” she asked. “You are the adult, act like one – and do not exploit us for your needs.”

Lipson said school staff often demonstrate what he called “ostrich tendencies” about sexual grooming of students.

“People don’t want to talk about this,” he said.

Shinoff said he is frustrated by school staff members who resist training efforts on how to recognize grooming and report sexual boundaries being crossed. He suggested that prevention efforts require a buy-in from the superintendent and school board.

“Training needs to focus on the environment, not the actor, so that this behavior is not tolerated,” Shinoff said.

Other presentations included:

- **Concussion management.** “It’s not a bruise on the brain – it’s something we can’t see,” said Dr. Michael Koester, of the Slocum Center for Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Eugene. “It’s an injury that happens at the microscopic level. A lot of the evaluation is much more difficult.”
- **Effective threat assessment techniques.** “Our country was founded on a history of aggression and violence,” said John Van Dreal, a school psychologist with the Salem-Keizer School District. “It should actually surprise you when people are not violent.” Using case studies, he described methods of identifying active threats to others.
- **Avoiding retaliation claims.** “A lot of employees who are in trouble will make a claim,” said attorney Karen Vickers. “That can be quite difficult to deal with.”
- **Addressing bullying in schools.** “We forget that bullying affects the bystanders,” said Peggy Holstedt, OSBA’s director of board development and policy services. “They know what’s going on, and that creates a culture of fear and disrespect.”

Local districts, individuals receive PACE Awards

Recipients of the inaugural PACE Awards were recognized April 25 at “PACE Day: Safe and Secure Schools” at the Hilton Eugene.

The awards highlighted two districts and three individuals who made significant contributions in 2013 to the Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) program.



Ralph Dickenson, Harney County School Board chair, received a PACE award for his efforts at Slater Elementary.

“This is our opportunity to recognize those programs and individuals who have distinguished themselves over the past year,” said Adam Stewart, chair of the PACE Board of Trustees and chief financial officer of the Hillsboro School District.

Recognized as outstanding programs were:

- The Gaston School District, which updated its security system and fire alarms, reducing yearly costs by about \$5,000 and helping to better protect students, staff and property.
- The South Lane School District, whose maintenance team embraced thinning and brush removal on a parcel of land to provide recreational opportunities and make the area safer for students and the community.

Individuals receiving awards were:

- **Ralph Dickenson**, board chair of the Harney County School District. He was instrumental in identifying areas of safety concern at Slater Elementary, including changing traffic flow in front of the school and improving visibility in the entry.
- Brian Anderson, a custodian in the South Lane School District, distinguished himself as a dedicated employee and positive role model, including his efforts to teach special education

students custodial skills that they can later use in the workforce. He has also spent many weekends providing outdoor recreational opportunities for these same students on his own time.

- Gustave Forster, superintendent of the Willamina School District. In addition to those duties, the superintendent has taken on a senior advisory position for one class period per day. He has donated the compensation for that extra work back to school sports and music programs. Forster is also a regular volunteer in the SMART Reading Program.

PACE projects 2 percent premium increase for 2014-15

Lower claims through the first 10 months of the fiscal year are expected to translate to premium savings for members, trustees of the Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) Board learned at their May meeting.

Mike Doherty, PACE's chief financial officer, told trustees that under current projections rates would rise an average of two percent next year. That's a significant change from the double-digit increases of the last two years. Member rates can also fluctuate individually based on claims experience.

Doherty noted that the projected rates also include plans to double coverage for damages from earth movement, from the current \$100 million total to \$200 million. Trustees unanimously approved that change as part of a review of reinsurance proposals; they approved a 2014-15 proposed budget and a revision of the property coverage document as well.

Lisa Freiley, OSBA director of labor and PACE services, outlined successes from the recent "PACE Day: Safe and Secure Schools" in Eugene, and member use of pre-loss attorney services.

PACE Trustee John Rexford expressed his support for pre-loss services, which members are required to use before taking an adverse action against an employee, or they could face a \$25,000 deductible.

"This is an approach we use at our ESD," Rexford said. "It's a pretty effective way to cap your costs; I really support this approach."

Geoff Sinclair, director of claims services, noted that members have embraced the pre-loss approach and that no one has had to pay the higher \$25,000 deductible since it was adopted in 2013.



'The Promise of Oregon' video shooting begins



Blue Chalk Media videographers film a student on the Blue Mountain Community College campus as part of "The Promise of Oregon" campaign.

Videographers and OSBA staff began visiting Oregon schools and community colleges in late April to begin filming for "The Promise of Oregon" public education support campaign.

"Are you the commercial guys?" one student asked Rob Finch and Jamie Francis of Blue Chalk Media, the project's contractor, as they scouted locations in and outside Sublimity Elementary School. They smiled and continued on.



Nollan Manning, Sublimity Elementary, North Santiam SD

"The Promise of Oregon" is not a commercial at all. It is an OSBA devised and driven campaign to demonstrate the importance of public education in our state. The "promise" is twofold: the potential that these young

Oregonians hold, and the obligation that we as a society have to ensure that they can deliver it.

Central to the campaign will be the use of videos and photographs of Oregon students, disseminated through a dedicated website, social media, local school boards, mainstream media and more. In the videos, the students complete this sentence, “I am the promise of Oregon because...”



Evi Kintz, Dilley Elementary, Forest Grove SD

The campaign is scheduled for a soft launch this fall and full unveiling at the OSBA annual convention in Portland in November. It will continue into the 2015 legislative session.

“This is our opportunity to remind Oregonians of the wonderful students in our public schools, and how the decisions we make today affect their future, and ours,” said Betsy Miller-Jones, OSBA’s executive director.



Tass Morrison, a member of the North Santiam and OSBA boards, helped in organizing video efforts at Sublimity Elementary.

President’s Post

Ensuring that accountability doesn’t undermine local control

We’re hearing a lot of talk about grades and accountability these days – much of that discussion moving in the right direction, and some needing close monitoring.



*Lori Theros
OSBA President*

In general, accountability is a concept worth embracing. But sometimes the systems we arrive at are unwieldy – witness the “proficiency grading” mandate passed in 2011 that unexpectedly left districts unable to consider student behavior in handing out grades.

With support from OSBA and others, legislation passed this year that fixed the earlier bill and restored local districts’ ability to set their own grading standards.

Recently, State Chief Education Officer Nancy Golden asked the state Department of Education to establish a district-level accountability system (see separate article in this issue of School Leader News). Rob Saxton, deputy superintendent of public instruction, has formed a task force on the issue, and OSBA is taking an active role, with two members on the task force: **Doug Nelson**, who serves on the OSBA and High Desert ESD boards; and Jim Green, OSBA’s deputy executive director.

Once again, OSBA is advocating to ensure the best result for school boards, especially in the critical area of preserving local control.

Lastly, recent news reports outlined the Oregon Education Association’s call for a moratorium on the reading and math tests tied to the Common Core State Standards. We’ve all heard that the new Smarter Balanced exams are more rigorous, and likely to lead to a drop in test scores.

That alone is no reason to reverse ground on the tests. Betsy Miller-Jones, OSBA’s executive director, has told Rob Saxton, Oregon’s deputy superintendent of public instruction, that we believe in accountability and support the state’s authority to set an assessment system.

Saxton has refused to consider a moratorium on the new tests, and that’s the way it should be. Common Core doesn’t interfere with local control – school boards still set curriculum, adopt textbooks and hire teachers.

We need to support reasonable efforts to hold ourselves – and our teachers – more accountable. That’s

particularly true when we are able to maintain local control for setting standards and creating solutions in each of our unique communities.

In the Loop

Board visits demonstrate the power of local control



*Betsy Miller-Jones
Executive Director*

Budget season has arrived again for school boards. This year is different than our previous ones, with less cutting and more adding back in most districts around the state. I have been visiting with boards, attending their meetings and talking with individual board

members about their challenges and success stories. Recently I spent time with boards in Tigard-Tualatin, Vernonia,

Portland Public Schools and Beaverton. Each faces different situations, but all are looking forward with a focus on student achievement and meeting new standards, preparing for new statewide assessments and making sure that every penny they add back during the budget process directly impacts students.

In Tigard-Tualatin the meeting opened with students talking about the success of the Tigerettes Dance Team, and continued with reports from AmeriCorps volunteers sharing classroom experiences and why they came to this community. Additional presentations reported on budget listening sessions, use of technology, preparation for full-day kindergarten, and Common Core State Standards. My trip to Vernonia included a tour of the new K-12 building completed just two years ago to replace the previously flooded buildings. The community has had to put in a significant amount of volunteer work to get the buildings up and functional. The result is beautiful, reflecting the logging background of the community, reusing old materials from the prior buildings in a soaring, light-filled modern facility. Budget challenges remain. The district will add back three days next year but continues to have very large class sizes. The meeting included inspiring reports from eighth-grade students who raised funds for a trip to Washington, D.C.

While visiting with Portland Public Schools Board members we discussed OSBA services, our Legislative Policy Committee's work on the draft legislative policies and priorities for 2015-17, OSBA's "The Promise of Oregon" public education campaign, the future of the Oregon Education Investment Board and the implementation of Common Core and Smarter Balanced

tests. The Beaverton board heard from an impressive group of high school students on the more active role they believe students should play in decision-making about educational issues affecting them and the district. Board members also saw a demonstration by the FIRST Tech Challenge World Champion robotics team from the Beaverton area, "Hot Wired," and held a thoughtful discussion on a district equity policy, community partnerships and other policy issues.

In all four of these school districts there exist common themes and very different ways of addressing challenges and finding success. These reflect the beliefs, values and needs of the individual communities. That is what local control, local governance, and locally elected school boards are about. While all are reaching for similar goals of high student achievement, their paths differ. Local control is more than control; it is community and parental involvement, communication at the most personal level about those things we value so highly: Our children, our future and our funds. When we utilize locally elected representatives to make decisions about how our children are educated, we have a system that measures and meets local community needs. It works.



Betsy Miller-Jones visits the new Vernonia school with Greg Kintz, member of the Vernonia School Board and OSBA Board.

Golden requests that ODE design district accountability system

State Chief Education Officer Nancy Golden has asked the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to create a district-level accountability system, including the authority to intervene with chronically underperforming schools or districts.

In a March 24 letter to Rob Saxton, deputy superintendent of public instruction, Golden outlined the

department's legal authority to create such a system, and the motivations for doing so. She asked Saxton to prepare a draft report by Aug. 1.

"We can never lose (sight) of the purpose of a strong accountability system – to improve student outcomes by driving continuous district improvement," Golden wrote. "A good accountability system creates incentives for success and disincentives for failure."

Saxton has formed a task force to develop a framework for the system, and OSBA is taking an active role in that work. OSBA has two members on the task force: **Doug Nelson**, a member of the OSBA and High Desert ESD boards; and Jim Green, OSBA's deputy executive director.

Both took part in the task force's first meeting May 14 (Nelson attended by phone), at which the members agreed that the accountability model would apply to all schools except alternative schools. The group also discussed what data would be used to measure schools. The next meeting was set for May 27.

Any questions or comments can be sent to Green at jgreen@osba.org.

State will make \$2 million available for Common Core assessments

About \$2 million will be available statewide to pay for assessment tools related to Common Core State Standards, the Oregon Department of Education announced.

The department said it recently notified superintendents by mail on how much will be allocated to each district and how funds can be used.

According to the department, districts can determine whether to purchase an interim growth assessment system of their choice or develop their own. Assessment tools paid for with these state funds must meet all the following criteria:

- Be used for students in grades K-9
- Be capable of informing instruction
- Be capable of measuring student achievement in terms of growth

For more information, contact Derek Brown at derek.brown@state.or.us or 503-947-5841.

'Summer Camp' for board members is just around the corner

Registration has opened for "Summer Camp for School Boards" – a chance to meet with school board members from across Oregon on July 18-20 at OSBA's annual Summer Board Conference.

This is your opportunity to learn more about the critical issues facing Oregon's schools and their leaders in a wonderful setting, the scenic Riverhouse Hotel & Convention Center in Bend.

Keynote speakers include Nancy Golden, Oregon's chief education officer, and Rob Saxton, the state's deputy superintendent of public instruction. Workshop offerings range from board chair responsibilities to legislative updates to labor relations.

Attend the pre-conference on July 18 and you can learn more about the State School Fund from Michael Elliott, State School Fund coordinator for the Oregon Department of Education. You'll also hear how Common Core can build lasting change in schools from Catherine Nelson of the National Center for Literacy Education.

Board secretaries' workshops will also be held on July 18. Once again we will offer a networking reception for conference attendees and a guest, from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. July 18.

For a complete agenda and to register, visit: http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Summer_board_conference-2014.aspx

