

October 2014

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503-588-2800

800-578-6722

[info@osba.org](mailto:info@osba.org)

## OSBA Events

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### *OSBA Annual Convention*

November 13-16, 2014

### *Oregon School Law Conference*

December 3-5, 2014

### *School Board Recognition Month*

January 2015

## New campaign, Annual Convention just around the corner

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It's almost show time.

The biggest OSBA member event of the year, the Annual Convention, has aligned with OSBA's biggest campaign ever, "The Promise of Oregon." The campaign is set to debut Nov. 14 when a new website goes live at [promiseoregon.org](http://promiseoregon.org) and an anthem video is shown publicly for the first time at the convention venue, the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront.

Deadline to register for the 68th Annual Convention ([www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Annual\\_Convention-2014.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Annual_Convention-2014.aspx)) is Tuesday, Nov. 4. Keynote speakers include Brandon Busteded, executive director of Gallup Education; Kati Haycock, president of The Education Trust; and Karl Mecklenburg, a former All-Pro linebacker turned motivational speaker. Nancy Golden, Oregon's chief education officer, will speak at Saturday's "Critical Issues" breakfast.

The convention welcomes hundreds of board members and other educational leaders from around the state each year to learn cutting-edge practices, develop leadership skills and share common experiences. This 2014 edition will put the spotlight on the "Promise" campaign, which aims to focus public attention on Oregon's amazing students and the need to invest in their education.

"This is the beginning of a movement that will restore the energy and investment needed to ensure that this generation will reach its maximum potential," said OSBA President **Lori Theros**, a member of the Klamath Falls City Schools Board of Directors.

OSBA staff and videographers from project partner Blue Chalk Media have already visited about 30 sites and interviewed more than 170 students, asking them to describe why each represents "The Promise of Oregon." Through social media, word of mouth and the website, students across the state will be asked to add to the mix by posting their own photos, videos and aspirations.

As the campaign progresses to the 2015 session in Salem, OSBA's legislative team will coordinate efforts at the Capitol to persuade lawmakers to sustain the turnaround in educational investment begun during 2013. Emails, phone calls and testimony from board members and other school advocates helped create a groundswell of support in 2013.

Now, with 2015 fast approaching, board members and educational leaders can ensure that their districts are prepared for the campaign rollout by attending the Annual Convention and sharing in the excitement of "The Promise of Oregon" debut.

Convention agendas and registration information can be found at:

[www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Annual\\_Convention-2014.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Annual_Convention-2014.aspx)

President's Post

## Pulitzer Prize winner joins "Promise" campaign

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New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof often refers to education as "an escalator to opportunity."

As well he should know. Kristof took up journalism as a teenager at Oregon's own Yamhill Carlton High School in the Willamette Valley, then went on to study at Harvard and Oxford.

His studies propelled him to a career that has been nothing less than stellar. He has won two Pulitzer Prizes (one shared with his wife, Cheryl WuDunn), traveled to more than 150 countries and written best-selling books. He has advocated for the poor and forgotten around the globe, and shined a light on the slavery and abuse of women.



Lori Theros  
OSBA President

Yet he has remained in touch with his roots, returning often to Oregon to hike, and to visit his mother at the family farm where he grew up.

Reaffirming both his Oregon ties and belief in the power of public education, Kristof recently lent his support to OSBA's "The Promise of Oregon" campaign. You will be able to see a short video address from him when the campaign website, [promiseoregon.org](http://promiseoregon.org), debuts on Nov. 14, as well as a longer one scheduled for completion in a few months.

You will be hearing a lot about "Promise" from me and many others when we kick off the campaign at OSBA's Annual Convention in downtown Portland Nov. 13-16.

In a recent column ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-the-american-dream-is-leaving-america.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/26/opinion/sunday/nicholas-kristof-the-american-dream-is-leaving-america.html?_r=0)) and in a similar one in 2011 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/17/opinion/sunday/17kristof.html>), Kristof argued that the education escalator has broken down in the United States.



A videography team films Nicholas Kristof outside the New York Times building in Manhattan for "The Promise of Oregon" campaign.

It's certainly true that we have many challenges to face in public education in this country, and in Oregon. In fact, a basic tenet of the "Promise" campaign is that Oregonians need to reinvest in our schools, so our young

people can reach the incredible potential you will see highlighted on the new website.

This is such a pivotal time for all of us who dedicate our time and energy to Oregon schools, and I'm so pleased to have Kristof's support as we seek to sustain the education funding turnaround the Legislature began in 2013.

Remember: You are OSBA, and OSBA is you. Together, we can get Oregon's opportunity escalator humming at top speed again.

In the Loop

## Who does what? Roles and responsibilities, and why they matter

The strength of exercises around "Who does what?" when defining the roles of the superintendent/administration and board, lies in communication and clarification. Through discussion we can reach a common understanding, and reduce or eliminate conflict.



Betsy Miller-Jones  
Executive Director

Conflict between boards and superintendents frequently arises not because anyone is doing anything wrong, but because either or both parties believe what is being done is THEIR job, or because both parties believe it is THE OTHER party's job. So you frequently have a superintendent saying, "My board is micromanaging the administration's work and I need them to understand it is my role, not theirs." At the same time the board chair says, "The superintendent is resisting allowing the board to make decisions that the community cares about and expects from us." The other extreme is the superintendent who says, "My board just won't step up – I need them to make tough decisions about redistricting our elementary zones, and deciding next year's direction on a building bond, but they insist that the decision is mine. That isn't my job; they need to lead." At the same time, the board chair tells me, "The board shouldn't have to make these politically hot decisions – that is what we pay the superintendent for."

The whole system would work just fine if the superintendent and board switched roles...as long as both agreed and they were clear what each job was! At least you wouldn't have the conflict.

In the end it isn't so much about who actually does what (OK, there may be some laws involved here), as it is coming to a common understanding of responsibilities and reducing conflict.

## Trustee meeting recap: PACE finishes fiscal year strong

There is also a gray area. It is fine to say “Boards lead, superintendent’s manage.” But what do those words mean in real life? Even if a board and superintendent have met and defined roles and responsibilities (or spelled them out in the superintendent’s contract), situations arise where it is necessary to ask “Is this board work? Or administrative work? And how do we know?” Those discussions can be very powerful and help to move the board and superintendent forward as a team. I have given boards tent cards that on one side say “Is this board work? Or administrative work?” and on the other side say “Do we have a policy on this topic? What does it say?” Those questions, brought up during a board meeting on an agenda topic, can go a long way to reduce future misunderstandings and tensions between a board and superintendent. Good communication and thoughtful questions and discussion are a necessary condition for good board/superintendent relations.

Occasionally it works in the district’s best interest for the board to weigh in on a topic that is clearly administrative, and frequently boards do better if they rely on the superintendent/administration for direction on topics or actions that are clearly in the board’s purview. Being able to clearly identify these, and AGREE that a slight role switch is better for everyone, makes the process go smoothly without any Monday morning quarterbacking of who did what and why. An example is a district’s decision on a controversial health curriculum. The board may have provided the appropriate role leadership by indicating that the curriculum is to be updated in their goals, and budgeting for that. Then it is up to the superintendent and his/her team to decide on the actual curriculum. It may, however, be in the district’s best interest for the board to vote on what is not a board decision, just to clearly make the statement that the board and superintendent are together on this, despite any community or staff resistance. So here you have a board acting “out of role,” but with the backing of the superintendent and in the district’s best interest. Conversely, while the board is responsible for “goal setting,” it is not usually a good idea for the board to do that without direct input from the professional educators as to what is reasonable and attainable. Frequently the number targets in any goal have to be set with the administration.

The common theme in all of these is communication. Leading and managing a school district is a complex job, and the board and superintendent must work as a team to do so effectively. The only way to keep the team moving forward together is to communicate through all the curves and bumps in the road. An ongoing conversation of “who does what” is a very useful communications tool.

Mike Doherty, chief financial officer of the Property and Casualty Coverage for Education (PACE) insurance pool, told trustees at their Sept. 29 meeting that PACE did very well during the 2013-14 fiscal year.

PACE’s retained earnings increased substantially and are closer to targets set during a capital modeling study performed by the trust’s actuary. Doherty said the major contributing factors are reduced property and liability claims. Because of those drops, Doherty said now is the time to move forward with increasing earthquake coverage statewide.



In other business, trustees received an extensive update from PACE’s investment services company, Russell Investments. Russell Client Executive Greg Coffey briefed trustees on PACE’s investment portfolio and provided educational information about the current state of the global economy and investment styles, strategies and options.

OSBA Director of Communications Tricia Yates presented the PACE membership survey, which is part of trustees’ efforts to ensure that PACE is providing the best property and casualty insurance services possible. Results will be compiled after the survey closes on Oct. 31.

Lisa Freiley, OSBA director of labor and PACE services, updated trustees on the state of the PACE pre-loss department. The department received more than 240 calls during July and August, ranging in subject from student civil rights and discrimination to termination and workers compensation.

PACE trainings are now in full gear. Among trainings discussed were those for PACE regionals, risk management coordinators, standard school safety protocols and boundary invasion toolkits. For more information on these trainings, which are free to PACE members, view the calendar of events at: [pace.osba.org/Calendar.aspx](http://pace.osba.org/Calendar.aspx)



## Signups still open for Leadership Oregon classes

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Time is running out to register for Leadership Oregon, an advanced leadership course offered to 20 enthusiastic and qualified individuals from OSBA member districts. Applications are due NOW.

Participants learn leadership skills and join a strong support network of education leaders from across the state. Leadership Oregon is not for everyone – it requires a solid understanding of basic board leadership skills (two of the three prerequisite courses are available online) and a firm time commitment. Participants must attend all sessions to graduate.

Leadership Oregon 2015 consists of four sessions, all held in Salem. Each session runs all day Friday and half of Saturday.

- **January 9-10: Advanced Leadership.** Explore the board's role in key current education issues.
- **February 20-21: Advocacy and Engagement.** Find your voice as an education advocate.
- **April 10-11: Key Issues.** Learn about social, print and broadcast media, and pick up tips for sound financial oversight.
- **May 8-9: Communications.** Learn about your communications role as a board member. Practice working with the media and engaging in social media to further enhance your leadership and advocacy skills.

OSBA covers the cost of the program, including hotel accommodations and most meals. Participants' only expenses are transportation to and from Salem, and some meals. For complete information and the application, go to [www.osba.org/ldor](http://www.osba.org/ldor).

## Elections open for OSBA Board of Directors

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Voting begins Nov. 15 for 10 positions on the OSBA Board of Directors. OSBA members will also be voting on three resolutions, including adoption of OSBA's legislative policies and priorities for 2015. Elections will close on Dec. 15.

The following OSBA Board candidates are running this year:

- Position 1, Eastern Region (incumbent **Mike Cosgrove**)

- Position 3, Central Region (incumbent **Doug Nelson**)
- Position 5, Southern Region (incumbent **Craig Prewitt**; challenger **Edward Lindbloom**)
- Position 7, Clackamas Region (incumbent **Terry Lenchitsky**; challenger **Linda Eskridge**)
- Position 9, Douglas/South Coast Region (incumbent **Samuel Lee**)
- Position 11, Marion Region (incumbent **Tass Morrison**)
- Position 13, Yamhill/Polk (incumbent **Stan Primozich**)
- Position 15, Washington Region (incumbent **LeeAnn Larsen**)
- Position 17, Multnomah Region (incumbent **Bobbie Regan**)
- Position 19, Multnomah Region (incumbent **Doug Montgomery**; challenger **Mary Lu Baetkey**)

Election-related materials can be found at:

[www.osba.org/About%20OSBA/LeftNav/Election\\_Center.aspx](http://www.osba.org/About%20OSBA/LeftNav/Election_Center.aspx)

## State Supreme Court hears oral arguments over PERS bills

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OSBA continued its defense of five school districts sued over the passage of Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) legislation in 2013 during oral arguments Oct. 14 before the state Supreme Court.

William F. Gary, whose law firm OSBA has hired to defend the suit, was among the attorneys appearing before the Supreme Court. Public-employee unions filed suit to challenge the 2013 legislation, which reduced cost-of-living raises for retirees, among other changes.

Schools statewide have collectively saved hundreds of millions of dollars in this biennium in reduced pension contributions as a result of the bills' passage. OSBA actively supported pension reform efforts during the 2013 regular and special sessions.

The Supreme Court justices could uphold the PERS changes, declare them invalid or strike down portions of them. A ruling is expected in the next few months.

"It's important that these revisions be upheld by the court," said Lisa Freiley, OSBA's director of labor and PACE services/staff counsel. "They are the linchpin to the PERS savings that districts have experienced over the past two years."