

Oregon Rural School Boards Advisory Committee
August 9, 2022

Meeting Summary

Attendees: Mandy Decker (Enterprise), Katy Nelson (Grant ESD), Patti Norris (Crook County), Stacy representing Mark Owens (Crane), Mark Redmond (Malheur ESD), Chrissy Reitz (Hood River County), Scott Rogers (Athena-Weston), Emily Smith (Helix), Dawn Watson (Phoenix-Talent), Amber Burns (Perrydale).

1. Welcome and introductions - Emily Smith, Rural Advisory Committee Chair

2. Establishment of Committee - Scott Rogers, OSBA President

Rogers took the committee through the process of establishing this committee as outlined in the OSBA Bylaws. Section 4.3, which was to request the board create the Rural Advisory Committee. The OSBA board unanimously voted in favor of the request at the April 2022 board meeting. Rogers also noted this is not about a political conversation but talking about the challenges and solutions for educating our rural kids.

3. Process to move from committee to caucus – Emily Smith

Smith summarized the OSBA guideline that the OSBA Board refers to when adding a caucus. Smith talked specifically about the tasks the advisory committee must complete before going to the OSBA Board to ask for a vote to formally form the Rural Caucus. This requires a vote of the OSBA membership. The vote could be as early as November 2023.

- At least one (1) year operating as a board appointed advisory committee,
- A record of regular meetings,
- Draft bylaws,
- Identified officers,
- Identified goals that align with the mission, vision and goals of OSBA.
- Draft action plans, and
- Draft budget

Smith noted that at the next meeting subcommittees will be formed to ensure that all actions required to form a caucus will get done.

4. Definition of Rural/Discussion of Shared Challenges – discussion by all

Smith began the conversation about how the group should define what a rural school is. Several committee members spoke about their district and how they see this committee defining what is a rural school.

- By ADM
- By location
- By challenges to educate students

The meeting transitioned into a discussion of challenges districts have in their rural district.

Smith – 50% of students come from outside the district, and afterschool care is not available.

Norris – staffing is a challenge due to housing issues. Staff buy houses in a neighboring city and move to work there when a position becomes available.

Reitz – Staffing and transportation challenges in winter. Lack of outside mental health options puts a strain on the schools mental health providers.

Burns – 50% students from outside district. No town infrastructure, its just the school, so transportation (travel) to work is challenging.

Decker – Administrators a challenge. No housing rentals available.

Watson – Housing is a challenge, long waitlists, afterschool care, mental health, and city services like SRO's. One police in the town so no SRO option.

Nelson – attitude of community toward public schools.

Rogers – Afterschool a challenge, location to border so attract educators with lower pay and less stringent licensure requirements.

Redmond – Superintendents from larger districts with same challenges. 1650 is the threshold for the Small Schools Association.

Rogers, how do we define a rural school? What constitutes a rural school (district)? The smaller group has been wrestling with this for a while now. Do we self-select?

Reitz – we'd feel lost if we didn't get to identify as a rural school. Thinks the urban/rural need to communicate better.

Amber – feels connected when they have the same issues as other rural schools. How do we bridge this gap? (urban/rural)

Rogers – we will need some sideboards and not just self-select.

Nelson – It is important to think about how “we” present ourselves in this group.

Redmond – 2021 enrollment by district – Hood River is 3800. Maybe set a 5000 threshold for a rural school.

Rogers – there are several complexities going on.

Decker – feel it is important to define what is a rural school. Put a size on like 5000 but let others who feel similar challenges decide for themselves.

Next Steps – Scott Rogers

A doodle poll will come out for the next meeting in mid-September.

Agenda:

- Quantify the rural definition
 - whether it's size of school, or challenges to deliver services.
- Subcommittees and assignments