

Rural Advisory Committee Meeting  
September 15, 2022  
Noon – in zoom

Attendees: Emily Smith Chair, Helix School District, Scott Rogers Athena Weston School District, Chris Cronin Grant ESD, Katy Nelson Grant ESD , Nicole Schott Condon School District , Patti Norris Crook County School District, Dawn Watson Phoenix-Talent School District, Chrissy Reitz Hood River County School District  
Staff: Lori Sattenspiel OSBA

Meeting topic: Define what is a rural school

**Chair Smith** – opened the meeting sharing the conversation had with Bill Graupp, a member of the OSBA Color Caucus, who helped get that caucus going. Bill shared what worked and what didn't for setting up that caucus, try and make decisions sooner than later was the biggest takeaway. Smith shared the Proposed Guidelines for membership options and the discussion today. (Document attached) Smith wanted to be sure that whatever option is picked that there is an appeal process for those districts who fall outside the guidelines but feel they are rural. Smith went through the options document.

Discussion of the options – summary

**Rogers** – noted that Hood River county's issues, a small school within the district that also has a larger school. Acknowledging that this situation along with the options outlined in the proposed guidelines, dealing with size of district, would exclude Hood River county, but the appeal process could pick them up.

**Reitz-** they (Hood River County) is just outside the number in the options discussed, but understand the difficulty in setting the size of a district somewhere. The appeal process would be a good addition.

**Nelson-** would like to see self-selection to be in this caucus, but very broad guidelines would be useful too. The appeal process is a good addition. Nelson prefers a larger caucus and be more inclusive.

**Smith** – shared another handout (available upon request) the School District 2020 Census - sorted by district. Population density information. (People per square mile) – the group looked at Hood River County, to illustrate the points about size of territory a “rural” district provides services too. For Example: Umatilla feels rural because of the rural location in the state, but it is large if you just look at the number.  
We could set the bar at 100-200 population density.

**Schott** - challenges faced by a rural school like Condon, Bend doesn't fit. Bend La Pine has a lot of political capital. One of our major challenges in Condon is having a voice.

**Rogers** – I felt in the beginning just like Katy with the self-selection, having thought more, the appeal process gives that additional process for additional complexities, like Umatilla. Some barrier to entry with an appeal is a good addition.

**Cronin** – county population is the simplest way to start and then allowing the appeal process, is the simplest option.

**Watson** – Using the county numbers as an option, Phoenix-Talent is a bigger school district, but small school. The county has a sliver of Medford which makes them seem larger than they are. They'd have to try the appeal process.

**Smith** – noted, using the school district boundary and not the entire county, so you don't cross into a larger school district. But also why using the population density 187 – if set at 200 gets a natural size break, but it brings in a lot of other schools.

**Watson** – reiterated, the location of a smaller district next to a larger one, the population in the county impact the smaller district.

**Rogers** – that is just like Hermiston, growing and encroaching on Stanfield, and Umatilla.

**Retiz** – likes the simplicity of using the population chart. This group can bring voice to these challenges, and it also impacts other schools that may be larger, but still benefit from this voice.

**Nelson** – Population density by school district is a good broad approach. Really feel we should emphasize the appeal process but would like to pick two or three options in the guidelines with an appeal process.

**Cronin** – having an identifier is a simple way, combined with a robust appeals process so if a district feels they are rural they can use that route. We need to be pretty clear about the guideline, and the population is a good way to identify districts.

**Norris**- always been an advocate for self identification – of the measures we looked at the population by density, in combination with total population of a district. Combining those two factors to solve the problem of low density but a large district numbers. (example - Bend La Pine)

**Smith** asked for clarification, do they have to meet both, or is it meeting one or the other?

**Norris** - a population density of less than 200 or a total population of less than X (30,000/50,000)

Part of the reason for the committee is to engage board members who are in districts. But how will we advertise or communicate the guidelines (and appeals process) for being in the caucus? The more complex we make the guidelines the harder it is to market.

**Rogers** – Regarding marketing, Rogers envisions a meeting at convention, or informational roundtable to communicate to the membership.

**Nelson** – marketing, use of social media is very useful. One in four parents are social media users. I want to thank whoever is the starter of the rural caucus, thank you. Diminished the angst locally because they believe their voice will be heard.

**Rogers** – The caucus idea was driven by frustration by fellow board members, especially during COVID, boards feeling like their voices weren't being heard.

**Smith** – filtered the population density data by school district. (20K or less in district. More than 20K but a density less than 200) .

Proposal to discuss.

Population density less than 200 or a total population in district of less than 20K – then the appeals,.

**Nicole** – Riverdale and Gladstone don't think that anyone considers them rural. Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties do any feel rural.

**Smith** – We should error on the side of adding too many, because if some district considered a rural and didn't feel rural, they wouldn't join.

**Rogers** – at time 39.25 Molalla in Clackamas County is much like Hood River County who would consider themselves rural. Colton is in that county and is rural. There could be some pockets of small schools in smaller communities. We need a line in the sand, establish a floor of 4000 or whatever, but also based on density.

**Rogers** – really appreciate the conversation, as I wear a few different hats. A role as a board member in a small rural school, and the OSBA president.

**Sattenspiel** – question -- consensus, or formal vote? It is up to the committee. If you feel you have had sufficient conversation, then we can move forward. If not, thumbs up or down if we are going in the right direction, and then vet some of this by others in your area if you think that would help.

**Reitz** - we may just not find the right spot, so lets set the parameters and use the appeal process. As we move forward with goals we can reevaluate any changes needed, especially if we aren't meeting the goals set for this group. I don't think we're ever going to come to a conclusion that says, "this is it".

**Smith** – time 46.9 agree, we should set the number. Nothing says we can't adjust it later if needed.

**Motion** - Any school district with a population density of less than 200 per square mile or a school district population of less than 20,000, with an appeal process, would be eligible to join.

Appeal process– district submit in writing why they should be included, or why the metrics don't adequately describe their district.

**Cronin** – agreed, with a **second**. Unanimous approval of those on the call. (Emily's laptop died)

**Sattenspiel** concluded the meeting.