

Friday General Session

Annette Mattson, OSBA President

OSBA President Annette Mattson opened the first general session of the convention with a strong message for attendees to use their individual voices in support of public education. Especially in a time of such serious budget woes for schools across the state, personal advocacy makes the difference.

She stressed the importance of networking while at the convention and beyond, when we return to our board rooms and other roles. We all share a commitment to education and concerns about the budget. “Get to know candidates running for office and help them learn about the needs in your schools,” she advised members, “and always remember education is about democracy and the future health of our economy and our society.”

Dave Hunt, Speaker of the House

A former school board member himself, Speaker of the House Dave Hunt applauded the service of board members and reminded attendees of the optimism we all shared at the close of the 2007 legislative session; great strides were made in funding – although not up to meeting the Quality Education Model – and we all had hopes that progress would continue in 2009. Then, Oregon was hit hard in the economic downturn and now is facing a greater percentage drop in state revenue than any other state in the country.

In the 2009 session, the Legislature chose to put as much money as possible into education to protect Oregon’s future. Progress was made toward recognizing the state’s role in capital construction funding, lottery surplus money now goes to capital construction, and the Facilities Taskforce was formed and funded. Hunt pointed to community colleges and their success in collectively prioritizing their facilities needs as a model for what schools are going to need to do in the future.

He then turned to budget issues. The Legislature crafted the 2009-10 budget using federal stimulus money, rainy day funds, budget cuts and two revenue enhancement bills to fill in the gaps. The two revenue bills were referred to voters for the January election. One fixes the corporate minimum tax which goes up from \$10 a year (the rate established in 1931) to \$150 a year for two-thirds of businesses in the state, and increases the marginal tax rate on corporate profits over \$250,000 to 1.3 percent until 2013, after which the increase applies only to businesses with corporate profits above \$10 million. The second bill, which affects only about 3 percent of Oregonians, increases the marginal tax rate on personal income above \$250,000 per couple by 1.8 percent.

Hunt underscored the importance of passing these measures for schools and for Oregon. Without them, there will be more deep and serious cuts. He concluded, “We are at a fork in the road. Passing 66 and 67 is necessary to get back on the road to progress for schools.”

Crystal Kuykendall

Dr. Crystal Kuykendall, a dynamic and entertaining speaker with an inspiring personal story, took the stage Friday morning. Much of her message focused on what we need to do to put children on the “high road” to success in school. She believes that children have changed and schools need to respond to the changes in their needs. And for those children who are delinquent or under achieving, their needs are not being met in the 6-hours a day we have them at school. The three basic needs that must be met are 1) the need for affection, 2) the need for appreciation and 3) the need for achievement. If these are not met in positive ways, kids will find them in other places – and this is what gives gangs the power to attract our kids.

Kuykendall tied her message to the role of the board saying, “Leadership is the process for promoting change.” Boards set the parameters, define boundaries and change behavior through policy. How we use resources is the key to success as a leader, and the biggest resource in any district is the employees. It is the attitude of the adults in a building that determines success at school.

A climate conducive to learning is established by the adults, and Kuykendall spoke at length about differences in teaching styles, learning styles, communication and the huge impact expectations have in student ability. As leaders we can facilitate change: rethink discipline, set policies for teacher development and standards for administrator accountability – and be true “merchants of hope” for all students.