At your service

Stories of support in our schools and communities
A message of service

"Every student is my teacher."

That’s the mantra of 2023-24 Oregon Teacher of the Year Mandy Vance, a middle school educator in the Oregon Trail School District in northeast Clackamas County. You can read more about Mandy on p. 34, but in short, she exemplifies the exceptional commitment our regional teachers have to meeting students where they are, building community, and providing caring, individualized support and encouragement that helps children blossom.

We work hard at Clackamas ESD to apply Mandy’s teaching approach to our work with students, educators and many other external partners. Our organization exists to serve, and our impact is broad: Children with significant learning challenges, educators who want to expand their skills, and organizations that need data and technology support rely on us daily. We’re pleased to present this annual report that shares some great examples of how we continue to fulfill our mission of service.

In all we do, we’re honored to have the guidance and support of our 10 Clackamas County public school districts, Clackamas Community College and countless other regional and state partners. We share a common purpose: to provide all students with access to equitable education services. Together, we are making a measurable difference in the lives of children and families.

With gratitude,

Larry Didway
Superintendent

Greg McKenzie
Chair, Board of Directors

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Quest at the Duck Tree
Haylie Rubio, 12th grade
Adrienne C. Nelson High School
Clackamas Education Service District is part of a network of 19 ESDs across Oregon. We partner with all 10 Clackamas County public school districts, expanding their ability to meet the educational needs of students in our region by providing a range of services and supports.

Our commitment to equity and our core values of collaboration, integrity, respect and excellence drive our work. Our services center on expanding educational access and success, and interrupting systems that lead to disproportionate outcomes for children. Key areas of direct service include early learning, special education, technology and teacher/staff support.

### School districts

1. Lake Oswego School District
2. West Linn-Wilsonville School District
3. Gladstone School District
4. Canby School District
5. Molalla River School District
7. Oregon City School District
8. Oregon Trail School District
9. Estacada School District
10. Colton School District

### Board of Directors


### Funding facts

- **$115.8M** total budget (36% state general fund; 64% grants, contracts and other sources)
- **$14.4M** in revenues sent directly to districts to spend on ESD services of their choice
- **$11.4M** in core service support to districts in special education, teaching and learning, and technology
- **$51.8M** in direct support to children, families and districts through grants and contracts

### Fast facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>56,400</th>
<th>85%</th>
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<tr>
<td>students in Clackamas County*</td>
<td>of ninth graders on track to graduate**</td>
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- **$115.8M** in revenues sent directly to districts to spend on ESD services of their choice

### Just over 10%

Of Oregon’s public K-12 students attend schools in Clackamas County*

* Source: Oregon Department of Education fall 2023 enrollment report

** Source: 2023 “Oregon by the Numbers” report, The Ford Family Foundation
Serving students

Children are the heart of Clackamas ESD’s mission. Our job is to help support the more than 20,000 preschool children and 56,000+ school-age students in Clackamas County* – either directly, or in collaboration with our regional school districts and other community partners. We specialize in helping youth who face extra obstacles to success. Our diverse set of services includes:

- **Head Start to Success free preschool** for 3- and 4-year-old children experiencing poverty
- **Intervention screening and special education services** to preschool children who exhibit delays or disabilities that affect learning
- **Life Enrichment Education Program**, which provides comprehensive education and specialized support to K-12+ students experiencing complex disabilities
- **Heron Creek Therapeutic Program**, serving K-12 students experiencing significant social, emotional, behavioral and academic challenges
- **Migrant Education Program**, offering year-round educational experiences and support to migrant students pre-K to age 21
- **C-TEC Youth Services**, which helps 16-to-24-year-old out-of-school youth overcome barriers to education or employment
- **Transition Network** facilitation, supporting 16-to-21-year-old students with developmental disabilities in shifting from school to employment
- **Clackamas Career and Technical Education Consortium** coordination, which helps create high-quality pathways from school to work

“I know it sounds so cheesy, but since I was a little one, I wanted to be a teacher. In my little mind, I thought, ‘I can educate the whole world.’”

- IRUM ZIA

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24,000+

children, students and youth are served directly or through district partnerships such as STEM and CTE programs

242

students from all 10 Clackamas County school districts participated in the 2023 Clackamas ESD Regional Art Show

$100,000

in potential scholarships were awarded to student participants in the 2023 Clackamas ESD Regional Art Show

99.7%

of infants and toddlers receiving early intervention support are served primarily in a natural environment (their home or in programs for typically developing children)

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*Duis: U.S. Census Bureau, Oregon Department of Education

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Duck Duck Goose
Zion LaMarr, 12th grade
West Linn High School

“I know it sounds so cheesy, but since I was a little one, I wanted to be a teacher. In my little mind, I thought, ‘I can educate the whole world.’”

- IRUM ZIA
Praise from a grateful parent

Clackamas ESD regularly receives thanks from families for the services we provide to their children. Excerpts from one “grateful parent” letter that particularly touched our hearts:

As I enrolled my twins into kindergarten recently, I was reflecting on my experiences with Early Intervention through Clackamas Education Service District. This letter of appreciation is long overdue.

My husband and I moved to Clackamas County in 2020 with three young children who already had developmental delays. While our world was flipped upside down, I found myself in a new community trying to nurture and teach three little people who had special needs.

Learning Specialist Aimee Apt and Speech Language Pathologist Erin Bricker acted as lifelines of support to our family. Every check-in made me more confident and helped me navigate how to best encourage growth and development of my sons.

Susie Goodell has been the ECSE Specialist working with our family. I am so grateful for her professionalism, expertise and commitment to inclusion.

Through the “Collaborative Problem Solving” course I met Leona French. Ms. French helped me to become more curious about challenging behaviors and implement specific strategies to address the needs behind those behaviors. My oldest was re-evaluated this past summer and he no longer qualified as needing services. His kindergarten teacher says he is a leader in his class and is doing fantastic. I do not think our family would have the successes I have described without the truly dedicated staff within CESD Early Intervention.

Thank you,
Carla Castaño Marin

Staff spotlights

We have an incredible staff with a range of skillsets. They are the reasons we can provide exceptional, individualized service to children and youth of all ages, whether they are pre-schoolers navigating emerging learning challenges, K-12 students who face complex barriers to learning, or older youth who need support transitioning to meaningful post-school work. Meet a few of our team members to discover the many ways we directly support students.

Paraeducators: The unsung heroes of every classroom

“As an educational assistant in our early intervention and early childhood special education program, Doug McDonald supports children in community preschool sites who exhibit delays or disabilities that affect learning. His job is to give them the extra support they need to be successful academically, socially and emotionally, and to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

Doug works closely with his students to model behavior that will help them learn and get along with others. He believes being in an inclusive classroom environment with typically developing peers is the best way for kids who exhibit delays or disabilities to build their skills.

“If kids are used to being around a broader range of people, the chances are better that they will become more empathetic, accepting and sensitive to all people,” Doug said.

Even after nearly 25 years in his position, the long-term impact of Doug’s work continues to awe him.

“A couple of times, I have received an invitation or heard from a parent of a kid I worked with who is now graduating high school or going to college, and you think back — wow! I was a part of that kid’s life, and maybe I made a difference,” Doug said with a smile.
Clackamas ESD’s Heron Creek Therapeutic Program serves K-12 students experiencing significant social, emotional, behavioral and academic challenges. As a functional therapeutic assistant, Larisa Strode works in one of Heron Creek’s kindergarten through third-grade classrooms, supporting the teacher and students in reaching each student’s Individualized Education Plan goals.

“At this age, they’re just so adorable. Even when they’re having a hard time, there’s so much growth that happens academically, behaviorally and socially,” said Larisa.

Larisa helps students when they have a question about their school work or need support to focus on their task, stay in their space or use appropriate language. She focuses on building relationships, checking in with students when they are upset and exhibit overly emotional or aggressive behavior.

“I want the students to feel like they’re heard,” Larisa commented. “A lot of our students are so used to not being able to express their concerns and adults just telling them what to do.”

Though she is assigned to one classroom, Larisa is known across Heron Creek for her willingness to help her colleagues with everything from developing curriculum to organizing supplies. After 25 years in education and seven years at Heron Creek, she continues to find meaning in being part of “something bigger” than herself.

“Our students’ excitement at being able to be successful at something makes my heart grow three sizes. It’s so exciting to see,” Larisa said.

Through the 2022-23 school year, Faith Ross-Stevens served as a behavior coach in Clackamas ESD’s Life Enrichment Education Program, which provides comprehensive education for students with complex disabilities and communication needs. Faith helped students learn the self-regulation skills they need to access learning. She also was an instructional coach, modeling and training educational assistants to build the skills necessary to help students reach their behavioral goals.

Working with students experiencing disabilities has been a lifelong interest of Faith’s. Both of her parents worked in group homes for adults with developmental disabilities, so people with special needs were a part of her world growing up.

“During high school, my mom encouraged me to volunteer in a special education classroom to get a feel for what working with this population was like,” Faith explained. “And I realized I love special education!”

“It’s the little moments. Like, this student independently used their alternative communication device to tell me that they needed a break today instead of engaging in physically aggressive behavior — that’s what motivates me.”

She began working at Clackamas ESD as soon as she turned 18, and in summer 2023, earned her bachelor’s degree in education. She became a licensed LEEP teacher in fall 2023.

“I really appreciate how much I’ve been encouraged to grow within Clackamas ESD. That encouragement has been life-changing,” Faith said.

“Our students’ excitement at being able to be successful at something makes my heart grow three sizes. It’s so exciting to see.”

– LARISA STRODE
Irum Zia is a lead teacher in Clackamas ESD’s Head Start to Success program, a free comprehensive preschool for children experiencing poverty. Wrangling the 32 preschoolers in her morning and afternoon classes each day would be daunting for most people. To Irum, it’s her dream job. “When seven kids are running in seven directions, and you have only two hands, you really want to be an octopus!” Irum joked. “I know it sounds so cheesy, but since I was a little one, I wanted to be a teacher. In my little mind, I thought, ‘I can educate the whole world.’”

Irum started her career teaching high school and college in her native Pakistan. After moving to Oregon, she pursued a job opening at a local preschool, and fell in love with the preschoolers’ “beautiful hearts.”

“The biggest reward is when the kids come running to you at the beginning of the day,” Irum said with a smile.

Irum has been teaching preschool at Clackamas ESD for five years. She’s proud of the program’s comprehensive support to students and their families, like pairing each family with a home visitor who works with them to set goals, access resources in their community, and support children’s learning and development at home.

“If a kid is coming hungry, it’s more important to address that need first, and learn why it is happening and how we can help,” Irum explained.

The relationship side is the biggest side of my job because they’re not going to get anything out of school if they don’t feel comfortable,” Whitney explained.

She connects with her students by doing one simple thing; finding opportunities where they can talk, and really listening. “A lot of times, my students don’t feel heard. So finding an opportunity to let them talk about whatever they want, and being engaged in that, is a good first step in starting that relationship,” Whitney said. “Checking in and giving them the space to be themselves and feel like someone is listening and caring about what’s going on in their lives is huge.”

Six years into her role at Heron Creek, she still finds celebrating her students’ wins incredibly fulfilling. “I recently pointed out to a student, ‘Do you realize that you just read that whole story on your own?’ He got this huge grin on his face,” Whitney recalled. “It was really rewarding to see something that he had struggled with totally click, and he was so excited about it.”
“I really enjoy working with kids. They make you constantly think outside the box about what you can do to help them. It is so much fun to finally find a way to connect with a child.”

– MINGMING HOHENSEE

Many of the students Clackamas ESD serves need help developing their motor skills. MingMing Hohensee, an occupational therapist in our early childhood special education program, supports children 3 to 5 years old in developing those skills, as well as their ability to process sensory information to help them play, be independent in daily activities and do well in school.

“We define ‘occupation’ as anything you do to occupy your time. So children, what do they do? They play. So we work on anything that prevents them from playing,” explained MingMing. “The best results come when they forget you are working with them on something, and they just think, ‘Oh, you’re so fun, and when I see you, it’s playtime!’”

MingMing often uses process art — projects focused on the process, not the end product — to improve children’s skills. Using tools like markers, paint brushes, scissors or tweezers and sensory materials like paper, paint, slime, dirt or sand, children develop their fine motor skills, muscle strength, coordination, focus and sensory integration.

“Activities that provide sensory input to our muscles and joints can help a child feel calmer and more regulated,” MingMing said. “So we try to find natural opportunities for kids to engage in activities that give sensory input throughout the day so they can help regulate themselves.

“I really enjoy working with kids. They make you constantly think outside the box about what you can do to help them. It is so much fun to finally find a way to connect with a child.”

Chan MacDonald serves the very youngest children — those birth to 3 years old — as a speech-language pathologist in Clackamas ESD’s early intervention program. He helps children expand their vocabulary and improve their syntax so they can better express themselves, refine their articulation and reduce stuttering so they are better understood, and improve listening and social skills so they can better connect with others.

“The challenge in working with young children is motivating child participation,” said Chan. “I like to say that I get paid to play, play being the primary vehicle for learning for kids. How can we structure a play routine the child is doing and make it an opportunity to learn new concepts and target particular words? How can we play this game and support the child’s ability to take turns? Because that’s what communication is; it’s taking turns.”

Only part of speech therapy for young children involves working directly with the child. Chan delivers speech therapy services in children’s homes to coach the family and ensure the child experiences a language-rich environment in their household.

“I want to make sure that when I leave the home, they’ve learned a strategy that they can practice to support the child’s development when I’m not there,” Chan explained.

Chan, who speaks several languages and routinely provides services in both Spanish and English, loves seeing how helping children better communicate improves their relationship with their families.

“It’s rewarding to see the transition from the parent just being someone that meets a child’s needs to being someone the child has a close bond with,” Chan reflected.
Participating in your community through work is an important part of a fulfilling adult life. That’s no different for young people experiencing disabilities. Their individual skills and unique perspectives are valuable contributions to the workplace, though their potential can be overlooked by schools, the business community, and sometimes their families and themselves. Working with educators and community partners, Clackamas ESD’s transition network facilitator, Kriss Rita, helps students ages 16 to 21 experiencing disabilities shift from school to integrated, competitive employment.

“If I were to give a small elevator speech — which is one of the things we teach our students to do — I would say I bridge the gap between schools and the agencies and community partners that can help these young people transition to adulthood,” Kriss explained.

This transition work is one example of a Clackamas ESD service that reaches beyond Clackamas County borders. Kriss provides support in five counties. Some rural areas she serves have just one special education teacher in their school district, making the training and support she offers even more impactful.

Students who come to school with differing backgrounds, skills and abilities create rich learning environments. All of the students Clackamas ESD serves are experiencing some type of disability or learning challenge, and we do everything possible to provide support in inclusive environments, where these children don’t feel separated from their peers.

“Inclusion is at the core of who we are as an ESD,” said Sara Snow, Clackamas ESD director of early intervention and early childhood special education programs. “Everyone benefits when they feel like they have a sense of belonging.”

In fall 2023, we launched a unique pilot project at Mt. Scott Elementary School in Happy Valley, where typically developing children learn alongside children experiencing disabilities. Called the PEER program, this preschool classroom offers structured learning, positive social experiences, and ideal opportunities for participating children and families to expand their understanding and acceptance of the diversity that exists within our community. Best of all, tuition — just $15 per month for children attending either morning or afternoon classes — is the lowest in the state.

“Learning together and from each other helps create a space where everyone can be included,” Snow said. “The PEER program allows this learning to start early, and for children to see the strengths in each other.”

Kriss Rita: Making the link from school to work

Kriss has planned student summits that help young adults build strong resumes, practice their interview skills, and develop elevator speeches on their best qualities, accomplishments and employment goals. She also routinely gathers multiple community partners at resource fairs where families can learn how to get developmental disability services or help finding a job, all in one place.

Kriss collaborates with students’ support teams to create employment plans that identify the students’ strengths, gifts and capacities as they relate to employment.

“We plan backward with the student’s ‘north star’ in mind, figuring out how are we going to help the student achieve their dreams based on their strengths,” Kriss said. “I wholeheartedly believe that anybody who wants to work can work. With the right support in place, they can be a contributing member of society.”

Clackamas ESD launches innovative preschool pilot program

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Kriss Rita: Making the link from school to work
LEEP track meet triumphantly returns after four-year hiatus

May 25, 2023, was a big day for students enrolled in our Life Enrichment Education Program. For the first time in four years, they were able to celebrate all they can do at the LEEP track meet at Garrett Field, adjacent to Gladstone High School, after a COVID-forced hiatus.

Nearly 100 students with complex disabilities competed in more than 40 events, from sprints with and without gait trainers and adapted bicycle races, to field events like the soft javelin throw, ball toss and bowling ball roll. Each student participated in at least four events and was awarded medals celebrating where they placed.

The students’ families and LEEP staff cheered on the students with pompoms and homemade signs from the sidelines, but the track meet gave them even more opportunities to be engaged. Parents and staff assisted the students as needed, crossing the finish line with them hand-in-hand.

“The LEEP track meet is meaningful to the students, but it’s even more meaningful to their families. Sometimes the parents run the race with their children,” said Karen Morley, adaptive physical education teacher. “I’ve had parents say to me, ‘I’ve never had people cheering for my kid before,’ and it means so much to them.”
Who says learning isn’t fun?

We provide many opportunities beyond the LEEP track meet for our school-age students receiving special education services to socialize with their peers, show off non-academic skills and engage with others in the community. And when it’s graduation time, we celebrate!
It’s a warm day in July, and one classroom at Naas Elementary School in Boring is fluttering with activity. Students are making art, some of it related to butterflies, which they are learning about and raising during summer school.

“Every year I like to find one subject to focus on that kids at all different grade levels will like and be interested in,” said teacher Stephanie Romero. “This year we focused on the life cycle of butterflies, embedding that topic in all subject areas like science, math, art, reading and writing.”

It’s not just the butterfly study and the chance to make cool art that’s special about this summer school classroom — the students are special, too. All of the K-4 children Romero taught in 2023’s month-long program are part of migrant families who work in agriculture and are transitory.

Clackamas ESD has facilitated a migrant student program in our region for 20 years, but our partnership with the Oregon Trail School District is among the most vibrant. For the past six summers, three to four Naas classrooms have filled with migrant youth. The school district arranges food service and provides classroom space at Naas, a convenient location for participating students. Clackamas ESD manages the funding and student eligibility process, and provides all of the instruction. We also go beyond academics, maintaining affiliations with a number of social service providers to help migrant families get any extra support they need.

Oregon Trail School District Superintendent Aaron Bayer is one of the program’s biggest supporters.

“We believe in the power of this program and the immense educational opportunities it affords our students,” Bayer said. “We are confident that the students participating in this program will forge a legacy of excellence and arrive at the future they deserve.”

Despite the transitory nature of migrant work, there is a fair amount of location stability for families served by the Oregon Trail summer program, leading to many extra benefits.

“I love getting to see many of the same children every year,” Romero added. “Consistency helps in building relationships. It’s a fun four weeks for them. They work on social skills and build friendships, in addition to getting ready for the new school year.”

“Summer is prime learning time for migrant students

“We believe in the power of this program and the immense educational opportunities it affords our students. We are confident that the students participating in this program will forge a legacy of excellence and arrive at the future they deserve.”

– AARON BAYER
SUPERINTENDENT
OREGON TRAIL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Regional art show draws record participation

A record 242 students from all 10 Clackamas County school districts participated in the 2023 Clackamas ESD Regional Art Show, an annual spring event to showcase the wealth of student artistic talent in our area. Nearly 50 juried and special awards were presented to middle and high school artists at a ceremony following a reception for student artists and their teachers and families. Prizes included almost $100,000 in potential scholarships. The generous prizes offered to students were made possible by the sponsorship of Pacific Northwest College of Art, Clackamas Community College, Venvino Art Studios and Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts.

Dream Rush
Abigail Hansen, 7th grade
Kraxberger Middle School

Hunger and Satisfaction
Mara Goodell, 10th grade
Harmony Academy

Glass Half Full
Travis Lindsay, 8th grade
Rosemont Ridge Middle School

The Pleasant Donkey
Sydney Earls, 12th grade
Colton High School

“Thanks again for such a memorable experience for all art students last Thursday! It was amazing and the student excitement was sparking the air!”

– JANICE PACKARD
ART TEACHER
ESTACADA HIGH SCHOOL

“You deserve a standing ovation! The show was amazing!”

– ANGIE STAMBUK
YOUTH OUTREACH PROGRAM COORDINATOR
LAKE OSWEGO FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS
CLACKAMAS ESD REGIONAL ART SHOW SPONSOR

“The art show and awards ceremony was spectacular! A job well done by your people who make this happen! It is just awesome and first class!”

– CRAIG CERVANTES
ART TEACHER
COLTON HIGH SCHOOL
More than 4,100 teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists and others work in Clackamas County’s 10 public school districts providing direct services to children. One of our key roles at Clackamas ESD is to support these professionals in any way we can. We provide many kinds of training and other hands-on learning to educators at all levels. We also work hard to celebrate and recognize their work. We’re able to provide this comprehensive support thanks to a combination of resources, primarily the State School Fund and Student Success Act funding, as well as targeted state grants. Our services include:

- Relevant professional learning opportunities on topics ranging from math and literacy instruction to trauma-informed teaching practices to suicide prevention, all based on district priorities
- Curriculum evaluation and implementation support from subject matter experts
- STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) learning support
- Equity training and support
- Student health and safety support, including providing nursing assistance, suicide prevention training, and many other forms of social and emotional health systems support
- Facilitation of the annual Regional Teacher of the Year nomination and selection process
- Data collection and analysis to help educators make evidence-based decisions on where and how to invest resources to support children
- Support for diverse educators through collaboration with the Multnomah-Clackamas Regional Educator Network
Educational assistants and other classified staff who help teachers and students are vital ingredients in classroom success. Elaine Merighi Morelock, Clackamas ESD’s coordinator for support staff partnership and learning, focuses her attention on regional paraeducators and the skills and support they need to serve the whole child.

A veteran trilingual educator, Elaine’s an expert on trauma-informed, culturally relevant practices and programs that help all paraeducators manage their work with students more effectively. Her workshops and coaching cover emotions and their impact on the brain, how trauma affects behavior, and regulation skills and strategies that will support students and staff. She uses a variety of tools — from discussion, coaching and mentoring to use of short videos — to help paraprofessionals explore and elevate their strengths, gain new skills and understanding, and benefit from customized training to best meet individual, team and district needs.

“What we call ‘regulation’ is really just the way people manage their thinking, emotions, attention and physical reactions,” Elaine said. “Understanding regulation is critical to creating a trauma-informed school environment and to gaining the confidence and mindset that will meet students where they are. The great news is there are proven, constructive strategies to get there.”

Elaine also heavily emphasizes self-care, relationship building, and the importance of humanizing our workspace in order to solve the challenges we face.

“Social emotional learning starts with adults,” she said. “These are challenging times to be in a classroom. To be at their best for students, educators must take care of themselves with compassion, and find successful ways to deal with stress and dysregulation. Creating resilience in adults opens the door for more learning for children. That’s an important focus of all the professional development I provide.”

Jan Burkhartzmeyer is a teacher on special assignment (commonly known as a TOSA) in Clackamas ESD’s Life Enrichment Education Program for students experiencing complex disabilities and communication needs. While the role of a TOSA might sound mysterious, what Jan does is straightforward: She’s an experienced teacher who coaches other LEEP teachers, guides program improvement strategies and professional development topics, gives additional support to students, leads special projects, and fills in as a substitute teacher or educational assistant when the need arises.

Jan has been a LEEP teacher for more than 30 years, so she’s well positioned to help teachers create students’ Individualized Education Plans, develop curriculum and apply personalized behavior strategies. More than anything, she’s there to provide staff with emotional support, taking extra care with newer teachers to help them from feeling overwhelmed.

“I hope that even though I’m not working directly with students like I used to, I’m still a conduit to pushing our students to become as independent as possible, whether it’s by my experience and what I can share with other teachers, or by going into classrooms and positively interacting with the students while I’m there,” Jan said. “I feel really lucky to work for a program with people who are so dedicated to the students. There’s just this love and commitment by our staff to these kids. I see that all the time.”

“The great news is there are proven, constructive strategies to get there.”

“Social emotional learning starts with adults,” she said. “These are challenging times to be in a classroom. To be at their best for students, educators must take care of themselves with compassion, and find successful ways to deal with stress and dysregulation.”
My job is to basically keep new teachers teaching.”

That’s how Bianca Espinosa describes her job overseeing teacher mentoring activities for Clackamas ESD and the Multnomah-Clackamas Regional Educator Network, which seeks to improve systemic support for educators.

Mentors focus on supporting teachers in their first few years in the classroom. They observe classroom instruction and give actionable feedback, help teachers build good relationships with students’ families and provide social-emotional support. But mentoring skills aren’t necessarily innate. That’s why Bianca serves as a “mentor of mentors,” designing and coordinating mentorship programs and related learning for school districts across Clackamas and Multnomah counties. Her experience as a student and teacher of color, and in mentoring teachers in diverse communities, allows her to pass along hard-won expertise about what good, anti-racist teaching looks like.

“Mentorship is not mandatory for new teachers, but it’s one of the most effective ways to help shape highly effective and engaging educators, reduce teacher attrition, and improve the quality of education for students,” Bianca explained.

“A really great thriving teacher makes a really great thriving class.”

– BIANCA ESPINOSA

In many ways, working with adults is a lot harder than working with high school students,” Bianca said. “We need people who are prepared to give feedback to adults in a way that is loving but also honest.”

Literacy trainings for regional educators are continuing during the 2023-24 school year.
Calculating new formulas for teaching math

We can do the math: Many students need more support in acquiring the level of math skills they need to succeed. And a lot of that comes down to the way we teach math in our schools.

Jaclyn Pfenning, Clackamas ESD’s math specialist, coordinates several initiatives that are making real changes in secondary math teaching and learning to apply to college via multiple pathways. And a lot of that comes down to the way we teach math and careers. She’s partnered with Multnomah Education Service District to create a new virtual “math adoption hub,” which is a one-stop educator resource for information about math reform initiatives, curriculum and professional development. And she’s working with regional STEM leaders to support implementation of new evolving standards and reforms adopted by the Oregon Department of Education. The trainings have been so popular that many districts statewide have incorporated the virtual modules into their in-house professional development sessions with staff.

Jaclyn also works directly with eight Clackamas County school districts on everything from vetting curriculum options to understanding the goals of the Oregon Math Project.

“Some of the districts we work with are small, and superintendents are wearing many hats. In some districts there’s just one math teacher in a school who needs a colleague to bounce ideas off of,” Jaclyn said. “I love having the opportunity to provide them with the assistance they need, to be part of their team and part of their solution.”

“I love having the opportunity to provide them with the assistance they need, to be part of their team and part of their solution.”

– JACLYN PFENNING

Translation support: Building communication with families

School translators and interpreters play a critical role in strengthening engagement with emerging bilingual students and families. Clackamas ESD provides ongoing training and other support to professionals who work as translators and interpreters in our partner school districts, thanks to dedicated state funding for this purpose. In 2023, we held our first statewide conference to help both new and experienced translators gain more skills.

“The professionals who provide translation and interpretation services in our schools have intense responsibilities that are continuing to grow,” said Leah Hinkle, an education consultant on Clackamas ESD’s teaching and learning team. “There is a great need for more training and support, so we were excited to bring education translators together to grow their skills and build a supportive peer community.”

The conference attracted a full house of nearly 100 bilingual school staff from districts throughout Oregon. National experts in translation and interpretation were on hand to share trends and best practices, and breakout sessions covered multiple topics, from interpretation “basics” to translating educational terminology.

Infusing classrooms with culturally responsive teaching

What does it mean in a classroom and school to understand and welcome cultural differences? How do you look beyond differences in cultural contexts to create welcoming environments for everyone?

Those are two of many questions Clackamas ESD is helping teachers and teacher leaders probe — and find answers to — in an ongoing series of workshops with national educator and author Sharroky Hollie, Ph.D. Dr. Hollie has trained thousands of educators across the country on how to more effectively engage with students through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. Beginning in the 2022-23 school year and continuing in 2023-24, he is helping educator teams from throughout Clackamas County cultivate student-centered skills applicable to all content areas and grade levels. The goal is to move these new engagement-focused behaviors from theory to practice.

“Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching is about ‘going where the students are’ to bring them to where they need to be academically,” said Dawnnesha Lasuncet, Clackamas ESD equity and inclusion coordinator. “Becoming culturally responsive changes instruction for the better, because you see the results for yourself: students who are more engaged, feel more supported and achieve at higher levels.”
Clackamas County notches another Oregon Teacher of the Year title

For the second time in three years, Oregon’s Teacher of the Year hails from Clackamas County.

Mandy Vance, a wellness instructor at Boring Middle School on special assignment in 2023-24 as a science teacher at Cedar Ridge Middle School in Sandy, was named 2023-24 Oregon Teacher of the Year in a surprise celebration Oct. 5, 2023. Oregon Department of Education Director Charlene Williams made the announcement in front of an enthusiastic crowd at Cedar Ridge that included several members of Mandy’s family, and many of her students and colleagues.

Just two weeks earlier, Mandy was named one of 17 Regional Teachers of the Year and a finalist for Oregon Teacher of the Year in an all-school assembly at Boring Middle School. She was nominated by two of her students, and selected for the regional honor from among a record 200-plus nominees in Clackamas County.

Clackamas County notches another Oregon Teacher of the Year title

Mandy has spent her career teaching middle school in the Oregon Trail School District. At Boring Middle School, she has designed district-wide curriculum to support students’ mental, emotional and social wellness, helped found and advise student affinity groups, and served as a teacher mentor and in other leadership roles. She is respected and beloved by students and colleagues, and has an unflagging commitment to building true community in her classroom, school and district. As one student wrote in supporting her Teacher of the Year application, “she brings light into every situation.”

“I am honored and humbled by this recognition,” Mandy said. “I became a teacher because I had several who made a difference in my life and showed up for me when I needed it most. It is my hope to do the same for each of my students, not just now, but for their lifetime.

“I strongly believe every student I interact with is my teacher; I learn from them just as they learn from me. I work hard to make my classroom a transformative, inclusive space where students are empowered and equipped to lead, and bridges of understanding and empathy are built.”

Thanks to a partnership with the Oregon Lottery, Mandy received a total of $15,000 for her state and regional wins, as well as a fund to cover her Oregon Teacher of the Year travel expenses. She will serve as a spokesperson and representative for all Oregon teachers during the coming year.

As Oregon Teacher of the Year, Mandy now becomes eligible for consideration as National Teacher of the Year.

Clackamas County’s most recent Oregon Teacher of the Year was Ethelyn Tumalad of Clackamas High School, who earned the honor in fall 2021.

For more about Mandy and to see videos of both of her Teacher of the Year announcements, visit clackesd.org/TOY
Serving district and community partners

Clackamas ESD exists because of partnerships – with individual families, school districts, local and state governments, and community organizations. We fulfill many roles through these partnerships: resources provider, systems builder, problem solver, community convener. Much of this partnership work is quiet and behind the scenes, but it’s an important part of our mission to serve our community. Read on for a few diverse examples.

“...I have taken on uploading and creating print jobs with your team. Lisa and Vee have been working magic for Lakeridge High School. I am so impressed with the service and quality I get. I can’t say thank you enough for making my life easier.”

- COREY FIVECOAT
  HEAD ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
  LAKERIDGE HIGH SCHOOL
We know that families and caregivers often feel the most comfortable in their local communities,” said Sara Snow, Clackamas ESD director of early intervention and early childhood education. “Many families don’t have the technology support they need extra support to meet developmental milestones. For the past two years, Clackamas ESD has made getting those assessments easier for Clackamas County families by offering free hearing and developmental screenings at several public libraries and community centers. These screenings are done in partnership with the libraries, often offered following their scheduled storytimes. The Lions Club also has offered vision screenings at several of the events.

“We know that families and caregivers often feel the most comfortable in their local communities,” said Sara Snow, Clackamas ESD director of early intervention and early childhood special education programs. “We can help support families by meeting them where they are to give them tools and resources to support their child.”

At these community events, families of children birth to 5 years old are invited to drop in to meet with friendly Clackamas ESD staff to have their child’s hearing screened, complete a play-based developmental screening, get questions answered, and receive recommendations on the next steps to take to support their child.

“A family member has a hearing impairment in one ear, and we were concerned our daughter was experiencing the same problem,” said one participating mother in Molalla. “We’re so thankful that we were able to get answers and information about what to do next, right here in our town.”

Clackamas ESD earns partnership awards from Parrott Creek

Clackamas ESD is proud of our years of partnership with Parrott Creek Ranch, a long-term residential treatment program for adolescent boys. The ranch, a program of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services, helps youth develop life skills, accountability, and prosocial behaviors and skills that help them reach their full potential to become contributing members of society. A small Clackamas ESD team provides educational and instructional services to youth ages 13 to 18, and we also offer some technology support.

We were surprised and honored to receive special recognition at Parrott Creek's annual partner appreciation event in fall 2023 for our years of collaboration. The three incredible teachers who serve Parrott Creek youth every day were presented with “Heart of Service” awards.

Clackamas ESD also received the Bill Olund Partner Award for the “exceptional support” we’ve provided to Parrott Creek.

Stepping up in times of crisis

Who do you call for help when you’re in crisis? Everyone can use extra support in their time of need. When school districts in Clackamas County experience a tragedy like the death of a student or staff member, an act of violence or another event that results in need for social emotional support services, they call Sierra Wilson, Clackamas ESD’s crisis prevention and response specialist.

Sierra coordinates the Clackamas Regional Flight Team, a countywide support network of counselors, psychologists, social workers and others who provide emotional and logistical support to schools following a school crisis.

“We go into schools at the hardest time of people’s lives and provide aftercare, including creating support rooms, bringing in therapy dogs — anything we can do to support the emotional well-being of students and staff in the aftermath of a crisis,” explained Sierra.

No crisis is alike, and having a trained group prepared to respond is critical to beginning the healing process,

“Our work empowers students to learn well because they learn their best when their whole body and mind are well.”

-- SIERRA WILSON

preventing further harm, and identifying and protecting vulnerable students.

Since implementation of the Student Success Act, Clackamas ESD has stepped up its mental health and crisis support to schools. In 2021, Clackamas ESD brought together our 10 regional school districts and key community partners to form the regional flight team. The first flight team cohort responded to three crises in its first month.

“I find equipping educators to support students in their grief journey very fulfilling,” Sierra shared. “I see the positive impact having someone who wants to listen and hear what’s going on in their life can have on a struggling student. Our work empowers students to learn well because they learn their best when their whole body and mind are well.”

Connecting child care providers to training and support

Clackamas ESD operates a robust child care resource and referral service that helps child care providers get the licensing, training and support they need to deliver high-quality care to families in our region. In summer 2023, we hosted more than 100 child care and preschool providers from across Oregon for the first-of-its-kind professional development conference. The event focused on offering early childhood professionals new strategies and support for navigating the rolling effects of the pandemic on young children. The opportunity to network with other child care and preschool providers was just as valuable as the conference’s wealth of knowledge.

“My favorite part of the conference was connecting with other professionals, hearing about their experiences in their classroom and learning some helpful strategies to use in my classroom,” one attendee shared.

We’re planning a follow-up conference in 2024.
Early childhood center: A dream in progress

Clackamas ESD will open a new early childhood center in fall 2024. The facility will help fulfill Clackamas County’s needs for more accessible, inclusive and culturally responsive support for children birth to age 5, helping bridge an education gap for our community’s youngest learners. In particular, the center will focus on providing more support to children and families from underserved populations, including those experiencing poverty, those experiencing disabilities and families who speak languages other than English. This new space will feature:

- Infant/toddler and preschool classrooms
- Dedicated spaces to evaluate children and determine if they qualify for special services
- Observation areas that allow early childhood providers to learn through training and classroom observation
- Inclusive outdoor play areas, including dedicated spaces for infants, toddlers and preschoolers

We’ve engaged our own staff and multiple community partners to create a vision and detailed plans for this new facility that center inclusion and culturally responsive practices.

Beyond education: Connecting families with needed resources

Because many of the children Clackamas ESD serves are among the county’s most vulnerable, we double down on helping families get access to resources to serve more than just educational needs. Each year, our Heron Creek Therapeutic Program coordinates a community resource fair open to all families in the school districts we serve. The 2023 event drew dozens of service providers who helped attendees learn more about a range of topics, from accessing available food support to navigating options for mental and behavioral health services. We make this one-stop shopping exercise more fun for families by offering snacks, gift cards and raffle items.

Making data accessible and meaningful

We live in an age of information overload. Dimple Doherty’s job is to make that overload more manageable.

As a Clackamas ESD student information systems data analyst, Dimple creates custom data solutions for the unique needs of Clackamas County school districts. She specializes in Synergy, a student information system software used by most regional districts. Synergy houses nearly all aspects of a district’s demographic, instructional and student service data used for day-to-day school operations. Districts also use this tool to fulfill mandatory state reporting requirements.

“When the district needs changes and solutions are not readily available, we customize our current system to accommodate their needs,” said Dimple. “We create custom reports to provide our clients an easier way to get information. We create new screens to provide our districts a way to track their data in one system instead of using spreadsheets that do not sync up.

“It feels good to be able to help out, to be able to make our districts happy and make their lives easier.”

The support Dimple provides became even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. She swiftly built systems for tracking hybrid schedules, cohorts, synchronous and asynchronous learning, COVID symptoms, health screenings and vaccinations that allowed teachers and school administrators to pull accurate information with the touch of a button.

“Requirements were moving so quickly that we had to think outside the box and make things work for our districts,” Dimple recalled. “It was big. It was challenging. It was fun because my innovation made a difference in a time of need.”

A Clackamas ESD employee since 2011, Dimple has stayed at Clackamas ESD because the technology services we provide have room for innovation and give her space to grow and be creative.

“I love my job,” Dimple said. “It’s challenging. It’s exciting. And it fulfills me.”
Spotlighting school safety at annual regional summit

Keeping students and staff safe is the paramount priority of every school district. Thanks to a federal grant, Clackamas ESD is a significant partner in helping school districts throughout Clackamas County and northwest Oregon proactively address safety and emergency management planning needs. We provide individualized training and consultation, and facilitate a quarterly roundtable discussion of district safety leaders to address shared concerns.

We also host a yearly safety summit focused on strengthening relationships between school districts and key stakeholders, and building emergency management skills and resilience. School safety is an “everybody” job. Superintendents; leaders of district teams in human resources, operations, facilities, nursing and communications; and school resource officers and other regional public safety leaders all have attended our summits to gain new skills, learn from real-life situation debriefings, and solidify relationships with regional partners who need to work together in emergencies.

A Clackamas County vision: Child care for all

Clackamas County is a child care desert; there are far more needs for child care than there are openings with providers. For example, only 15 percent of children under age 2 have access to a child care slot. Expanded access to child care allows more people to participate in the workforce, helps children prepare to succeed in school, and stabilizes communities.

Clackamas ESD is one of many organizations tackling this complex challenge. We are a leader and co-convener of the Child Care for All Coalition, a collaborative effort to expand access to high-quality, affordable child care throughout Clackamas County. Our major partners in this initiative are the Clackamas Early Learning Hub and Clackamas Workforce Partnership. Child care providers and advocates, community partners and elected officials also participate in the coalition.

In the past year, the coalition released a comprehensive report that provides a gap analysis of the child care workforce, wages and facilities, and reviews potential costs of scaling high-quality child care throughout Clackamas County. We also convened a business leader summit in summer 2023, and engaged civic leaders in identifying access to child care as a vital strategy for community growth and stabilization. We continue to work with key stakeholders and advocate for increased funding that will expand child care options; and develop and support the child care workforce.

Two days of immersion in Native American culture

Clackamas ESD proudly partnered with the Native Wellness Institute and North Clackamas Schools on two special events in summer 2023 that highlighted the richness of Native American culture.

The gym at Milwaukie High School hosted a coastal jam that featured a great meal and the songs and dances of Native canoe culture. A day later, Happy Valley Middle School was the site of a powwow, complete with grand entries, singing, dancing and feasting. Both of these events were free and open to the public; thanks to a generous grant Clackamas ESD received from the Oregon Department of Education as part of the American Indian/Alaska Native student success plan. We also partnered with regional filmmakers to make a mini-documentary of the events, which you can view at clackesd.org/cultureandeducationfilm.

Introducing students to technical careers on “Manufacturing Day”

Hundreds of high school students curious about technical careers immersed themselves in those options as part of two “Manufacturing Day” celebrations in October 2023. Clackamas Community College, Clackamas ESD and Clackamas Workforce Partnership collaborated to give teenagers a comprehensive look at CCC’s career technical programs that allow students to earn certificates and degrees that get them job-ready in two years or less. Students also were able to see hands-on workspaces, and talk with instructors and employers. Representatives of nearly 20 area companies representing a range of industries were on hand to share details about the types of jobs available in their sectors. Many local companies also opened their facilities for tours.

National Manufacturing Day traditionally is celebrated the first Friday in October to draw attention to the manufacturing industry and help inspire the next generation of the manufacturing workforce. The 2023 event was so popular in Clackamas County that it expanded to two days to meet student demand.

“...She had so many questions about what it might be like to have a job as a welder, machinist, etc. She said that she had never thought about doing a job like that before. What you’re doing is making a difference for kids like mine. Thank you!”

– MOTHER OF A STUDENT WHO ATTENDED MANUFACTURING DAY