

# ALL IN

Stories of  
service to our  
schools and  
communities



**Clackamas**  
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT



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Untitled

Sophie Elam, 9th grade, Alliance Charter Academy



### Leaning in to our mission of service

In fall 2024, a lot more little feet started walking on the Clackamas Education Service District campus. We were thrilled to welcome dozens of new pre-K learners to the Clackamas Early Learning Center, which opened its doors in September. This new facility is helping fill the overwhelming need for more preschool services to Clackamas County children and their families.

It's also a great example of how we go about our work as an education support organization. The early learning center is a partnership with many other children's services providers; no fewer than five organizations are involved in providing preschool education, family support and early childhood intervention services within the walls of the building. We worked meticulously with many partners, particularly our Native communities, to ensure the new center is providing culturally responsive services, and functioning as a model for other organizations.

Clackamas ESD's mission is focused on strengthening our educational system and ensuring equitable access to educational services for all children. We support our 10 regional school districts in multiple ways, from providing direct services to students of all ages who face complex learning challenges, to improving the skills of our educators to address students' academic and holistic needs, to offering reliable, cost-effective technology services that save districts money and keep data safe and secure.

We try to do two things with our annual report: Give you a snapshot of the breadth and value of services we provide in our community, and introduce you to just a few of the incredible employees who are living our mission to lead, serve and innovate each and every day.

We appreciate the collaborations with school districts, Clackamas Community College and countless other organizations that allow us to do our joyful and life-changing work. Our deep thanks for entrusting us as a partner in service to the children and families of Clackamas County.

With gratitude,

Larry Didway  
Superintendent

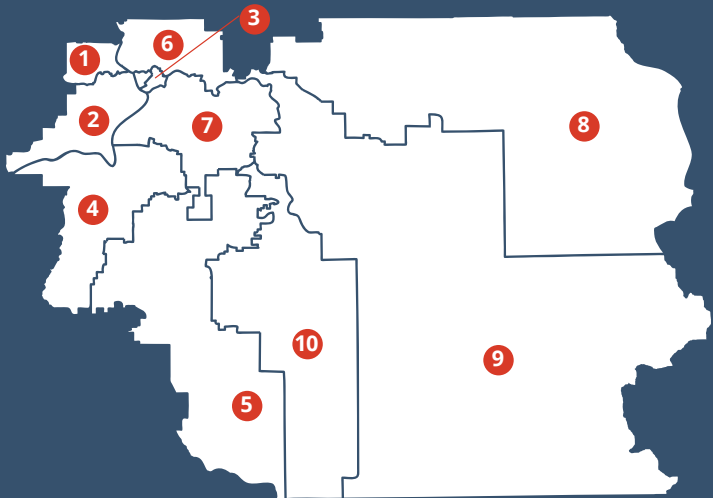
Linda Brown  
Chair, Board of Directors

# Lead, serve and innovate for learning

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
- 6. North Clackamas School District
- 7. Oregon City School District
- 8. Oregon Trail School District
- 9. Estacada School District
- 10. Colton School District

**just over 10%**  
of Oregon's public K-12 students attend schools in Clackamas County\*

### Board of Directors

Right: Linda Brown (chair).  
Below (left to right):  
Wade Byers, Nadene Duffield, Jon Eyman (vice chair), Rick Larson, Len Mills, Susan Trone.



### Funding facts

**\$115.8M**  
total budget  
(39% state general fund; 61% grants, contracts and other sources)

**\$17M**  
in revenues sent directly to districts to spend on ESD services of their choice

**\$15.5M**  
in core service support to districts in special education, teaching and learning, and technology

**\$51.5M**  
in direct support to children, families and districts through grants and contracts

### Fast facts

**56,000**  
students in Clackamas County\*

**88%**  
of ninth graders on track to graduate\*\*

**91%**  
five-year graduation rate\*\*

\* Source: Oregon Department of Education  
\*\* Source: 2024 "Oregon by the Numbers" report, The Ford Family Foundation

# ALL IN for Students and families

Clackamas Education Service District exists to aid and empower children on their education pathway. All our programs and services center around supporting the more than 20,000 preschool children\* and 56,000 public school students\*\* in Clackamas County — either directly, or in collaboration with our regional school districts and many 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** for preschool children who exhibit delays or disabilities that affect learning
- **Child care resource and referral**, offering training and support to child care providers
- **Life Enrichment Education Program**, providing 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**, helping 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



\* Source: U.S. Census Bureau

\*\*Source: Oregon Department of Education

 <p><b>\$135,000</b></p> <p>in potential scholarships awarded to student participants in the 2024 Clackamas ESD Regional Art Show</p>	 <p><b>nearly 200</b></p> <p>students from nine Clackamas County school districts participated in the 2024 Clackamas ESD Regional Art Show</p>
 <p><b>24,000+</b></p> <p>children served directly or through district partnerships</p>	 <p><b>632</b></p> <p>evaluations of preschool children conducted in 2023-24</p>

Flores de Tehuantepec  
Evelyn Douthit, 10th grade  
Wilsonville High School



## Staff spotlights

A majority of our Clackamas ESD staff provide direct support to children and families. Our dedicated team helps youth of all ages navigate their barriers to learning, from the youngest of pre-school children to older students preparing for post-high school transition. Because families play such a big role in student success, we support parents and other family members in the learning journey, too. Here are snapshots of just a few of our incredible employees with diverse roles who are deeply invested in helping all students achieve their potential.

**S**teve Schroeder's elementary school classroom is filled with harmony — because he makes music a daily part of his holistic approach to teaching and leading. As a teacher in Clackamas ESD's Life Enrichment Education Program, Steve is devoted to students experiencing complex disabilities and communication challenges.

"My number one priority as a LEEP teacher is to create a safe, healthy and most importantly happy classroom,"

**"My students and their abilities bring incredible value to the general education school environment."**

**- STEVE SCHROEDER, LEEP TEACHER**

Steve said. "So often we are inundated with things like meeting state standards, academic goals, assessments, data collection, service minutes — and all those things are important. However, if our students are not happy and wanting to be at school, many of those other things don't happen."

Steve's commitment to creating a positive school experience for his students extends beyond his classroom. Our LEEP classes are hosted in multiple schools, and it can be tough for LEEP students and staff to feel included in their school's community.

"I've helped students and staff at my host school learn more about kids with disabilities, creating all-school lessons on ways people can be both the same and different," Steve explained. "It's led to more social interaction as students increasingly discover that we can have difference without distance. My students and their abilities bring incredible value to the general education school environment."



**M**igrant students face particular challenges that arise from their families' frequent moves to follow seasonal work in agriculture. **Denise Aquino** is here to help them. As a graduation and family engagement specialist in Clackamas ESD's Migrant Education Program, Denise works directly with middle and high school migrant students and their families.

"My role is to support migrant students, to mentor them, to ensure they have all the tools they need to thrive," Denise explained.

When students move across school districts or state lines, they have many adjustments to make. Denise works with counselors to ease credit transfers from school to school. She helps students connect with after-school programs, career exploration opportunities and many other resources.

"I also act as a bridge between the schools and the families," Denise said. "I can help the parents advocate for their children and motivate them to graduate from

high school and develop a plan for whatever they want to do after."

Denise has a passion for this work, as she is a former migrant student herself. She had a positive experience in the Migrant Education Program summer school.

"Migrant students can feel isolated and alone. There's so much pressure. I also went through that, and that personal experience drives me to make sure they know they're not alone and can always count on me if they need anything," Denise said. "It's really, really rewarding."

**A**s a speech-language pathologist in Clackamas ESD's Heron Creek Therapeutic Program, **Jessica Livernois** helps students experiencing significant social, emotional, behavioral and academic challenges with their individual communication needs, and improves their ability to express themselves.

Those needs are diverse. Jessica helps non-speaking



students communicate with sign language and various kinds of devices. She assists many who need extra help with pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Jessica also supports many students in the social aspects of communication.

"We go over how to find solutions to problems that may come up in different situations, how to ask questions, how to enter conversations, and how to try and make friends," Jessica explained. "A lot of times, we will work on these things in the moment as they come up in the classroom."

Jessica's passion for speech-language pathology has taken her around the country, but working at Heron Creek has provided unique fulfillment.

"Heron Creek is just so different," Jessica said. "This is the most one-on-one time I've been able to have with kids, and being able to build good relationships with them makes a big difference."



we're the first people they meet in the community, and we're building rapport with families."

Isabel has helped build partnerships with local libraries, doctors' offices and community organizations that serve culturally diverse families to bring our free hearing and developmental screenings to all corners of the county. She's also expanding the culturally responsive services available at our screenings, such as translated materials and access to interpreters. She even serves as a translator for Spanish-speaking families herself.

Isabel organizes parent groups to engage in shared learning, and makes connections to available resources and events of interest. She has a deep personal bond with her work, as she is raising a daughter with autism.

"My daughter was eligible for early intervention services at the early age of two, and I learned so much about how to support her as a parent from the providers we worked with," Isabel said. "If it had not been for them, I don't think I would have learned the skills I needed to support and advocate for her."

**I**sabel Ramirez is a family resource specialist in Clackamas ESD's Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Program, which supports young children who exhibit delays or disabilities that affect learning. Isabel improves awareness of and accessibility to early intervention support for all families in our community.

"Many families aren't aware of early intervention programs in the county and how to access them," Isabel said. "So

**"I learn something new from the kids every day."**

**- OLGA MENDEZ,  
HEAD START TO SUCCESS LEAD TEACHER**

Preschool has a big impact; it builds a foundation for learning and getting along with peers that helps children be successful in kindergarten and beyond. But so much of a child's learning and development happens outside the classroom with their family. That's why Clackamas ESD's Head Start to Success program, a free comprehensive preschool for 3- and 4-year-old children experiencing poverty, emphasizes working with children's families to set goals and help them access resources in their community.

**Olga Mendez**, a Head Start to Success lead teacher, has a unique understanding of the program's layered approach to supporting and engaging families from her experience as a parent of a child in the program. She began working with Head Start to Success as a classroom assistant and aspired to lead her own classroom.

"It didn't take long for the team to recognize Olga's talent and ability," said Claire Lichtenheld, Head Start to Success program coordinator. "She has truly grown into that role. She has a calm presence with children. She's patient and loving."

While working as a teacher, Olga also is pursuing an early learning certificate at Clackamas Community College on a bilingual scholarship.

"I learn something new from the kids every day," Olga said. "I am so proud of them."



As an educational assistant in Clackamas ESD's Life Enrichment Education Program, **Kellie Reeves** serves students living with complex and multiple disabilities. She supports lesson plan development, helps students communicate with switches or gaze boards, attends to students' medical and personal hygiene needs, and much more.

"With guidance from our teachers and specialists, we educational assistants help teach students new skills and assist them with their daily needs," Kellie explained. "We might work toward a job skill or work on hygiene — anything to help them have a better standard of living."

Kellie's experiences with her son, Shawn, inspired her to work in special education. Early on, Kellie and her husband knew Shawn was different. They brought him to Clackamas ESD for developmental testing, and Shawn was referred to an early childhood special education preschool classroom in Milwaukie.

"We were impressed. These teachers really knew what they were doing," Kellie recalled. "I thought to myself, this is what I want to do — return the gifts they gave us. These beautiful children deserve to have a purpose in life with the help of caring hands. That is where I want to be."

"Our jobs can be challenging at times, but the reward is so much bigger."



**"These beautiful children deserve to have a purpose in life with the help of caring hands. That is where I want to be."**

**- KELLIE REEVES, LEED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT**



Head Start to Success is an amazing free preschool program offered by Clackamas ESD, but families have to navigate the income eligibility and application process. **Mirla Cobb** is the first person they talk to. An enrollment and recruitment specialist, Mirla attends many community events, sharing information about Head Start to Success and encouraging families to apply. She spends time with each family who



is interested, learning their family story, determining program eligibility, and acquiring all the documents needed for the program application.

“You learn so much about the families in these conversations,” Mirla said. “Their circumstances are different, and they have different needs.”

Mirla also helps families take an active role in their children’s education. She organizes monthly, well-attended Head Start to Success policy council meetings, an opportunity for parents to weigh in on program policies, give feedback and share concerns.

“I love the family engagement part of Head Start,” Mirla said. “The more participation from families, the better. Their experience being included in Head Start’s policy-making helps them feel comfortable speaking out and advocating for their child. So once they go on to elementary school, they’re comfortable attending a PTA meeting. For me, that’s a big win.”



Students in Clackamas ESD’s Heron Creek Therapeutic Program experience significant social and emotional challenges, and need specialized support to build self-regulation skills and overcome other barriers to success. As a therapeutic intervention coach, **Mitch Beck** helps elementary students develop safe, respectful and responsible behavior.

Mitch believes in partnering with students to redirect their behavior.

“Collaborative problem solving is a very student-first philosophy,” he explained. “It helps the student be heard, gives them autonomy, and teaches them to find a solution to help themselves in tough situations.”

Data drives Mitch’s work. Heron Creek tracks students’ behavior against individualized goals. Mitch interprets this data to find patterns, assess which intervention approaches are most effective for each student, and gauge progress over time.

“We’ve had a handful of students who have made it out of



our room and into a less restrictive environment, from having a one-to-one aide to a classroom with fewer aides,” Mitch reported. “And it’s always nice to hear from the parents that they’re seeing progress at home.”

Mitch also coaches his colleagues on how to turn a student’s behavioral incident into a learning experience the student can grow from.

“When I get feedback that my support or advice was helpful, that’s pretty awesome to hear,” he said.



## A new space for our youngest learners to thrive

Clackamas ESD was thrilled to open the **Clackamas Early Learning Center** in fall 2024. This facility, years in the planning and construction, provides instruction and evaluation services to children ages birth to 5. Our focus is on supporting children and families from underserved populations, including those experiencing poverty and/or disabilities, and those who speak languages other than English.

The early learning center features:

- Four preschool classrooms and two infant/toddler classrooms
- Dedicated spaces to evaluate children and determine if they qualify for early intervention or early childhood special education services

- Areas that allow early childhood providers to learn through training and classroom observation
- Flexible spaces for use by families and community partners where culturally responsive services and training can be delivered
- Inclusive outdoor play areas, including dedicated playgrounds for infants, toddlers and preschoolers

Instructional services are offered through multiple partnerships with the Head Start to Success program, Preschool Promise program, Clackamas County Children's Commission and the Future Generations Collaborative. We also operate a unique classroom that provides an opportunity for children experiencing disabilities to learn alongside peers in a supported environment.





### Parent advocate: Maria Sanchez uses skills learned as a Head Start to Success parent to push for change

When Maria Sanchez first enrolled her daughter in Clackamas ESD's free Head Start to Success preschool program, little did she know that her family's experience in the program would inspire her to become a parent advocate. The following year, Maria found herself in Washington, D.C., sharing her family's story and advocating for continued investments in early childhood education.

Head Start to Success heavily promotes family engagement. Every family is paired with a home visitor who works with them to set goals, access community resources, and support children's learning and development at home. Families also are encouraged to participate in Head Start to Success's policy council meetings to give them a voice in their children's education.

Maria honed her leadership skills on the HSTS policy council, and also joined the PTA at her daughter's school and a county-wide early learning policy council. In April 2024, she served as Oregon's parent representative for the Zero to Three Strolling Thunder annual advocacy day in Washington, D.C.

Maria and 50 other families met with policymakers to tell their stories and ask Congress to take action to build a better future for infants, toddlers and their families. On their priority list: affordable, high-quality child care, a national paid family and medical leave policy, and more support for infant and early childhood mental health.

"Advocating in D.C. was a profound experience," Maria said. "It was an honor to tell my family's story. I went in there fighting for a cause, but the experience was far more than I expected."



### Post-high school students prep for employment at unique "summit"

Hundreds of students in our region continue their education in "transition" programs through their school districts after earning alternative high school diplomas. These 18- to 21-year-olds experience varying disabilities that qualify them for extra support as they segue to work and adult life. All receive continuing services from their home districts, ranging from academic coursework to job training.

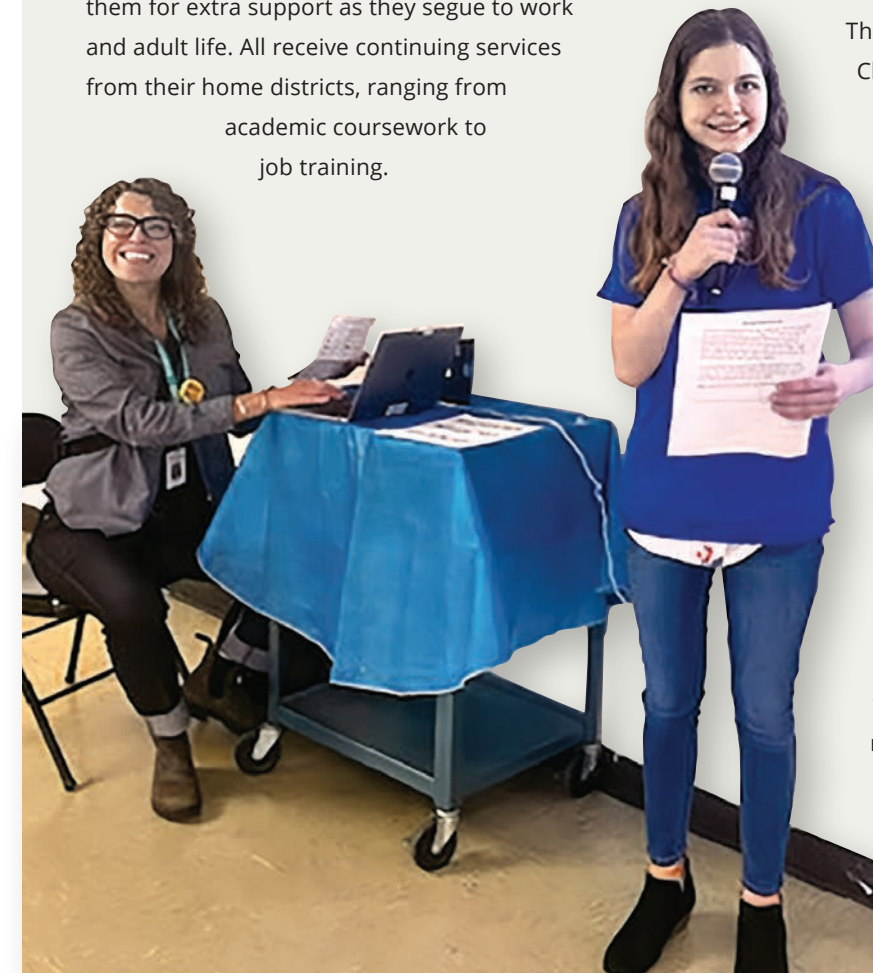
More than 80 of those adult students from the Canby, Lake Oswego, Molalla River, North Clackamas and West Linn-Wilsonville school districts gathered in spring 2024 for a first-of-its-kind event in Clackamas County designed to boost readiness for post-secondary employment.

The Clackamas Student Summit, co-sponsored by Clackamas ESD and the Canby School District, featured a full day of building leadership skills, elevating community employment awareness and strengthening relationships with peers who face similar challenges.

Students built "elevator" pitches, and participated in mock interviews with professionals from many area organizations.

"This event is helping students look toward their future," said Kriss Rita, Clackamas ESD transition network facilitator. "We're helping them gain some specific skills and begin to build fuller lives."

"It's also an opportunity for these students to make social connections and make new friends. They learn that they are not alone — they discover others who are like them."





**Traditional Lion Teapot**  
Francisco Romero Pereyra, 8th grade  
Alder Creek Middle School

**Students' talents shine in regional art show**

More than 40 juried and special awards and nearly \$135,000 in potential scholarships and other prizes were presented to middle and high school student artists at the eighth annual Clackamas Education Service District Regional Art Show awards ceremony in April 2024.

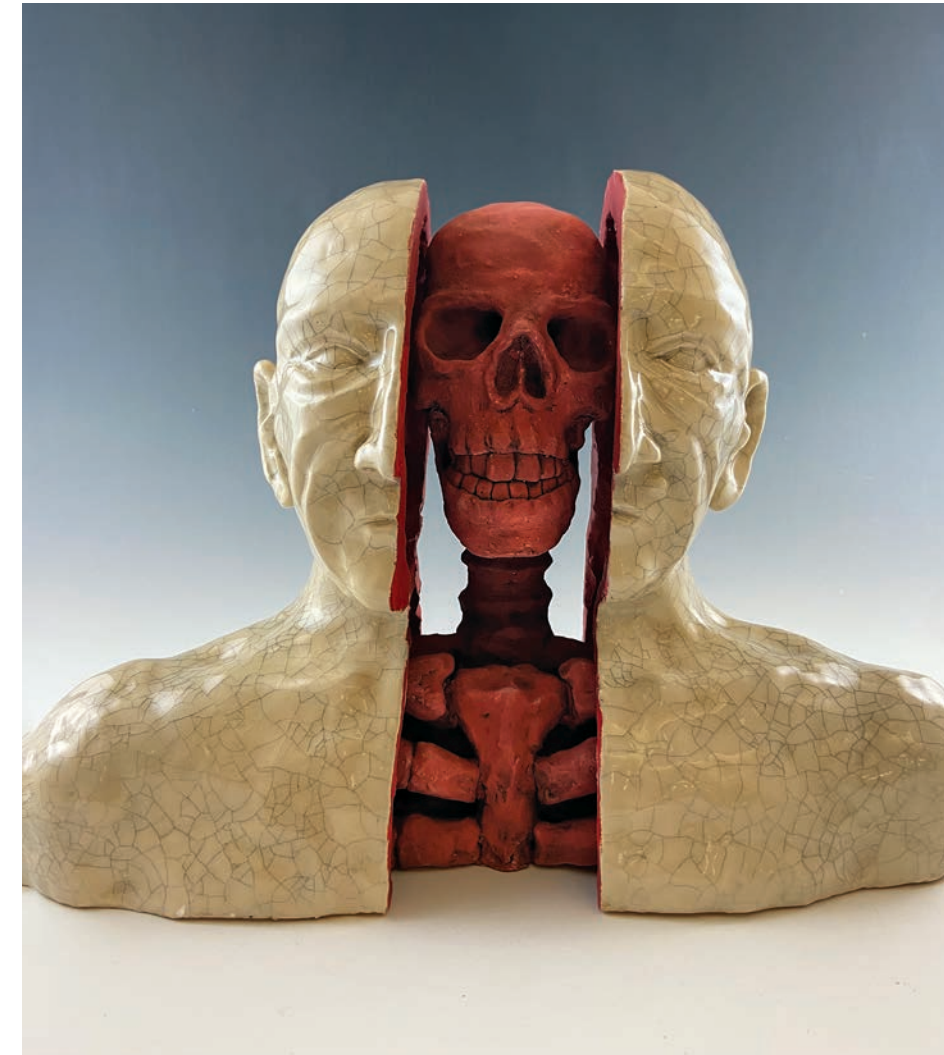
Lake Oswego High School senior Atticus Perry won "Best in Show" honors for his sculpture "Bone Dry."

The awards ceremony honored the nearly 200 students in nine Clackamas County school districts who submitted artworks to the show, and was preceded by a reception for student artists and their teachers and families. 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.

**My Best Nerd**  
Kalani Elliot-Khamkeomany, 10th grade  
Adrienne C. Nelson High School



**Pagoda**  
Callista Denson  
6th grade  
Kraxberger Middle School



**Bone Dry**  
Atticus Perry, 12th grade  
Lake Oswego High School  
*Best in Show Award*



**Delicate Duo**  
Brooke Thomsen, 11th grade  
West Linn High School  
*Staff Choice Award*



**When the World Stops — Silence**  
Lara Stiehler, 12th grade  
Lake Oswego High School  
*Superintendent's Choice Award*

**Secretary Bird**  
Lilly Horn, 11th grade  
Estacada High School





## Learning doesn't take a summer break

Summer offers students and educators a well-deserved break after the rigors of a school year. But more and more, summer is becoming a critical time for many students to keep building their academic and social skills as they transition between school years.

That's particularly true for children served by Clackamas ESD, all of whom face one or more barriers to learning. Hundreds of children in our migrant, early learning and special education programs benefited from enrichment

programs in summer 2024 that offered extra time in the classroom and more one-on-one support.

For example, our Migrant Education Program summer school provided students with multi-week focused learning in several locations around the county, in partnership with school districts. Learning centered around core subjects of reading and math, but was far more expansive, folding in hands-on projects in the arts and sciences, such as building and launching rockets.



Carnival

### Learning is joy.

That's why we work so hard to build fun and celebration into all Clackamas ESD learning opportunities. From festivals and field trips to track meets to graduations and job shadows, we work to fully engage our school-age students receiving special education services, and extend their learning in fun and memorable ways throughout the year.



Science experiments



Track meet



Field trips



Winter festival



Graduation



Job shadowing/exploration



Zoo unit

# ALL IN for Educators and other school staff

More than 4,500 teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists and others work in Clackamas County's 10 public school districts providing direct services to children. Clackamas ESD supports these professionals with many kinds of training and other hands-on learning. We also work hard to celebrate and recognize their efforts. 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, 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**, including training for educators on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching
- **Student health and safety support**, including nursing assistance, suicide prevention training, and other 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
- Mentoring and other support for diverse educators through partnership with the **Multnomah-Clackamas Regional Educator Network**



**100+**

training opportunities provided to educators and other classroom professionals in 2023-24



**250+**

nominations received for 2024-25 Clackamas ESD Regional Teacher of the Year, a record number for Clackamas County, representing 40% of the statewide nominations



**350**

attendees at first annual AI Empowered EDU conference



### Literacy support work

The well-known adage is that children learn to read through grade 3; after that, they read to learn. Data show our state still has much work to do to get all children reading fluently in those critical early grades. While Clackamas ESD is not benefiting from state grants supporting literacy initiatives, we have stepped up in multiple ways, primarily thanks to Student Success Act funding.



In summer 2024, Clackamas ESD hosted two week-long sessions to immerse regional elementary educators in the science of reading. They spent their time learning hands-on skills to help them create structured literacy lessons in their classrooms and build successful readers. Gratitude to our partners: the Institute for Multisensory Language Education for providing the training, and Athey Creek Middle School and Meridian Creek Middle School in the West Linn-Wilsonville School District for hosting our events.

In 2024-25, we're also facilitating a year-long early literacy seminar series that further grounds regional educators in best practices in literacy instruction. Presenters in the five-session series include many from Clackamas County. Each session is tied directly to different aspects of Oregon's Early Literacy Framework.

### Supporting the work of school translators and interpreters

"This was by far one of the best PDs I've been to in a long time! I loved the perky pace and the hands-on learning."

- 2024 DUAL LANGUAGE WORKSHOP ATTENDEE

#### Translation and interpretation conference

In spring 2024, Clackamas ESD hosted its second Educational Interpreters and Translators of Oregon Conference. Nearly 150 school interpreters and translators and the administrators who support their vital work gathered for a day of professional learning, with sessions in English and Spanish on important topics such as translation ethics and use of artificial intelligence in interpretation.

The action-packed day also featured a panel discussion with several of the presenters and two bilingual students, and a lunch-time performance by the talented young people of the Ballet Folklórico De Nuestros Ancestros.



#### Dual language workshops

"Spanish por vida!"

Clackamas ESD was honored to welcome internationally renowned dual language education advocate José Medina, Ed.D., as a professional development facilitator during 2024. He led several lively workshops in English and Spanish for teachers and administrators exploring best practices for supporting emergent bilingual students. Themes included using an equity lens in lesson planning, and creating inclusive learning environments with culturally sustaining instructional practices.





“Bob Parker is a master teacher in every sense of the term.”

- AJAI HUJA, PRINCIPAL,  
SABIN-SHELLENBERG PROFESSIONAL  
TECHNICAL CENTER

## North Clackamas architecture/design educator named Regional Teacher of the Year

**R**obert Parker, a licensed and practicing architect who took a non-traditional path to teaching, was named 2024-25 Regional Teacher of the Year for Clackamas County in a surprise celebration at the Sabin-Schellenberg Professional Technical Center in Milwaukie in September 2024.

Bob began teaching in Sabin-Schellenberg’s career and technical education program seven years ago, after being asked to teach an architecture course as a sideline to his private architecture practice, and discovering he loved helping students develop their design skills. The center serves all high schools in the North Clackamas School District, and Bob has expertly



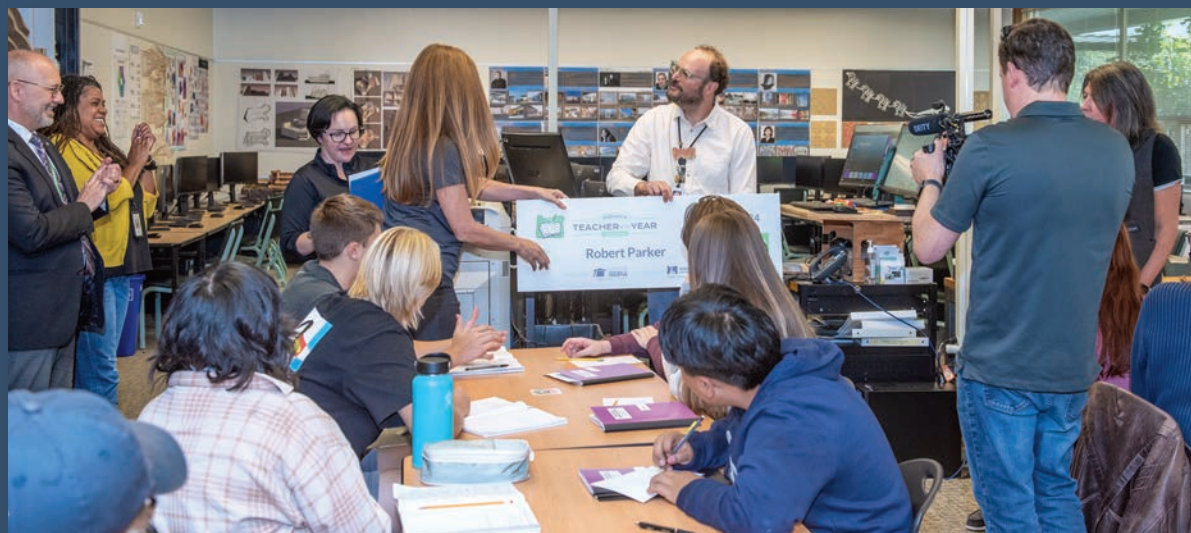
leveraged his industry experience to create engaging learning opportunities for his students.

“Bob Parker is a master teacher in every sense of the term,” said Sabin-Schellenberg Principal Ajai Huja. “He fully engages his students by creating predictable routines and multiple choices to approaching learning goals. He is a strong advocate for his program and has worked hard to acquire resources and technology needed to provide amazing learning experiences. Perhaps most important, he has built strong relationships with students. His classroom is full of laughter, enthusiastic dialogue and unfettered joy.”

Bob was selected from more than 250 regional nominations and an exceptionally strong group of 11 finalists, including two other CTE instructors.

The Teacher of the Year awards program is sponsored by the Oregon Department of Education, in partnership with the Oregon Lottery. Regional winners receive a \$1,000 cash prize.

Learn more about Robert Parker and see a short video of our celebratory event at <https://www.clackesd.org/Robert-Parker/>



## Supporting social emotional health of educators

Educators need support navigating the intense needs of students, and creating a culture of belonging in their schools and classrooms. Clackamas ESD is a collaborator with the Multnomah-Clackamas Regional Educator Network, which is ramping up its support to teachers in this area.

**Kelsey Bowers**, MCREN’s culture and climate lead project manager, partners with schools and staff to improve classroom environments for both students and adults. In fall 2024, she launched two adult social emotional learning cohorts for school licensed and classified staff.

“We forget our educators are humans, too, and need support in social emotional health,” Kelsey said.

Kelsey’s own experience as a student of color is never far from her mind as she helps educators build more inclusive school cultures.

“I’m biracial and attended Portland public schools on the west side of the city, where not a lot of people looked like me,” Kelsey reflected. “I had a lot of experiences where I had to explain who I was that I should not have had to have. In order for things to change with inclusivity of kids and adults at the margins, we have to get a little bit uncomfortable and do things differently.

I want to make the system better for kids like me.”

Kelsey Bowers (left) in conversation with colleagues.



## Helping industry professionals make the switch to teaching

Students who complete career and technical education courses in high school are highly engaged and have a phenomenal graduation rate. Clackamas ESD helps coordinate CTE opportunities throughout our region, and one of our key tasks is to help pave the way for more industry professionals to earn restricted teaching licenses and move into the classroom. We help evaluate applicants for these special licenses, and guide them through the multiple requirements and paperwork. Over the past year, we’ve assisted nine people as they moved from industry to high school classrooms in several fields of study, including health sciences, culinary arts, engineering technology and human services.

## Easing the way to the classroom for support staff

Educational assistants and other classified staff who support teachers and students are vital ingredients in classroom success. They also have to pass state-required tests. Clackamas ESD has developed and administers a local assessment that meets state requirements to gauge paraprofessionals’ knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. We facilitate these assessments for school districts in Clackamas County, and also provide advance study resources to help staff prepare for the tests.

Our student services support assistant, **Melanie Inns**, has centralized the testing process for our regional districts and made it as easy to navigate as possible. Since these assessments are one of the first experiences a new paraprofessional has working in our schools, Melanie recognizes that a positive testing experience can boost



## Exploring uses of AI in education

In May 2024, Clackamas ESD partnered with Multnomah ESD, Northwest Regional ESD and the University of Portland to sponsor the AI Empowered EDU Conference — the first of what we hope will be many regional efforts to share best practices on the use of artificial intelligence in K-12 education. A sellout crowd of 350 educators attended this one-day event that featured prominent national speakers. While there was a heavy focus on AI in the classroom, participants attended many sessions with broad applications on the use of AI tools and how to ensure that AI increases equitable access in education. The University of Portland graciously donated the space for this event. We’re gearing up for a follow-up conference in spring 2025.



## Preparing teachers to address a range of student safety, behavioral and mental health issues

Students bring many challenges with them to school that can impede learning. Clackamas ESD’s student services team is a “wraparound support” unit, providing an array of assistance to educators and administrators to help them:

- Prevent and respond to suicides and other crises
- Learn CPR and master other medical protocols
- Develop strong behavior safety practices
- Use trauma-informed practices to engage with students and promote their resilience

This past year, we’ve also stepped up “interrupting bias” training. Our team has delivered multiple trainings to district teams in Clackamas County, using regionally developed tools and materials. The goal is to help staff create learning environments free of discrimination, harassment and intimidation, and, when bias incidents occur, respond using a trauma-informed framework. Our comprehensive training resources include a digital reporting tool, a bias incident response manual and communication templates. We also continue to provide on-demand coaching and consultation services.

their confidence as they begin new jobs supporting students in the classroom.

“From my initial contact with the paraprofessionals, my goal is to make them comfortable and give them all the information they need to feel prepared when they come in,” Melanie said.



Melanie Inns



Pop Art World  
Reyna Pfenning, 7th grade  
Welches Middle School

“I believe in the power of strong communities coming together to tackle challenges and ensure students have opportunities to thrive. It’s why I do this work.”

- HOA NGUYEN, CLACKAMAS ESD STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST

## ALL IN *for* **District and community partners**

As a regional organization, Clackamas ESD has unique opportunities to bring people together. Our partnerships with individual families, school districts, local and state governments, and community organizations are central to our mission of service. We’re a resource provider, systems builder, problem solver and community convener, always focused on improving educational opportunities for children of all ages in our community. Read on for a few examples of this work over the last year.



**47**

local, regional and state clients served by our technology services team



**200+**

trainings and other professional development opportunities facilitated by our child care resource and referral team



**130+**

training and professional collaborative opportunities for school district staff facilitated by our student services team

## Partnerships to combat student absenteeism

There are many factors that drive student success in school, but one of them is crystal clear: School attendance matters.

Chronic absenteeism has grown dramatically in Oregon since the COVID-19 pandemic. Clackamas ESD is partnering with our regional school districts to tackle this problem, as well as other challenges that impede students' successful pathway to graduation.



Hoa Nguyen with Clackamas ESD Superintendent Larry Didway

### Engagement support

**Hoa Nguyen** is Clackamas ESD's student and community engagement specialist, helping Clackamas County school districts address chronic student attendance issues.

Hoa is a former school attendance coach and the eldest daughter of Vietnamese refugees. She understands the outside forces that can affect students' ability and desire to attend school regularly.

"My parents owned a neighborhood convenience store, and I would spend every day after school and on weekends at the store and helping my three younger siblings with their homework," Hoa recalled. "I often had to help my parents

translate at medical appointments and school conferences. I sometimes had to miss school to work at the store. So that lived experience has really informed my work with students and families."

Hoa's multi-faceted work includes helping train school front-line workers such as school secretaries on how to build stronger relationships with students and parents.

"Relationship-based interventions are the most effective," Hoa explained. "You have to meet students and families where they are to navigate uncomfortable conversations about what's at stake when the student is absent."

Data is a big part of the work. Hoa is practiced in helping develop stronger, transparent systems to track student attendance, and test and tweak improvement strategies — everything from home visits, to referrals to mental health services, to supporting families who have basic needs such as food or housing.

"Absenteeism has a lot of different causes, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution," Hoa said.

In addition to her "regular" job, Hoa is a state legislator and a member of the David Douglas School District Board of Directors.

"There are so many competing priorities. I'm always trying to find that commonality," Hoa reflected. "I believe in the power of strong communities that are coming together to tackle challenges and ensure students have opportunities to thrive. It's why I do this work."



### Data-driven collaboration

Clackamas ESD formed the **High School Success Network** in late 2023 with representatives from the Colton, Estacada, Gladstone, North Clackamas and West Linn-Wilsonville school districts' student success teams. During its first year, network participants identified root causes of student absenteeism, experimented with data-driven solutions and measured their impact.



"When we think about things we all face as districts, such as dealing with student attendance issues, it makes sense to create a community dedicated to improvement," said Jeremy Cohen, associate director of secondary programs/middle schools in the North Clackamas School District. "We can test strategies individually and talk about them as a group. Why did it work? Why didn't it work? That's how improvement science works."

The network is continuing its activities this year, and participants regularly use their time together to debrief change strategies they've been trying, like creating intentional seating charts and identifying students most likely to be impacted by peer conflict (a major cause of absenteeism).

"This network gives school and district staff opportunities to better collaborate," said Schay Esparza, Clackamas ESD's assistant director for data and evaluation. "We're using an improvement science lens to solve problems together, while learning about tools and processes that support success for all students."



### Keeping technology systems running smoothly

Technology is so woven into every part of our daily lives we often overlook all that goes on behind the scenes to make it function seamlessly. Clackamas ESD's team of experienced, relationships-focused technology professionals collaborates to provide regional school districts, governments and non-profit organizations with a variety of technology solutions at reduced costs.

**John Gates**, a systems infrastructure engineer, works on the team that maintains and improves our technology services.

John's job involves keeping the ever-evolving systems that run our schools operating smoothly. His key tasks include managing the "k12.or.us" domain for K-12 public education entities statewide; maintaining data center services that provide fast internet connection and secure cloud storage of critical information; and supporting the software tools schools use to manage their finances, human resources and student information.

**"The work we do allows our districts to leverage the latest technology without the huge capital outlay they would have if they did it alone."**

**- JOHN GATES,  
CLACKAMAS ESD SYSTEMS  
INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEER**

"The work we do allows our districts to leverage the latest technology without the huge capital outlay they would have if they did it alone," John explained. "The partnership with our districts and the positive impact of the work that we do is more rewarding [to me] than making a profit for a corporation."

### STEAM partnerships brings NASA workshop to regional students

"3 ... 2 ... 1 ... you're out of oxygen!"

On a warm July afternoon, nearly 30 fifth graders huddled in their makeshift habitats breathed sighs of relief after completing their timed challenge to build and access these shelters that would keep them safe in their visit to the moon.



No matter that they actually were on the gym floor at Molalla Elementary School, or that the shelters were built out of newspapers and tape.

Under the tutelage of Hilda Pereyo, a guest aerospace educator affiliated with NASA, students paid rapt attention to lessons on drones and moon engineering in a unique summer workshop funded by NASA, and offered through the Northwest Earth and Space Sciences Pathways program. Integrating many STEAM topics (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics), these grant-funded workshops occur throughout the year, providing rich after-school and summer learning for students, and ongoing professional development for teachers.

Clackamas Education Service District is proud to be a collaborator in bringing innovative summer camp experiences like this to students throughout our region. As a member of the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership, we work to expand access to STEM and STEAM learning for Clackamas County students through after-school and summer enrichment programs. In June and July 2024, multiple summer schools in our region embedded STEAM topics in attention-grabbing workshops like Pereyo's.

### Empowering rural youth and families in partnership with Todos Juntos

Todos Juntos, a non-profit organization supporting and empowering rural youth and families in Clackamas County, is nationally recognized for its successful student engagement partnerships with school districts.

Clackamas ESD is pleased to partner with Todos Juntos in providing rich after-school and summer STEM programming in the Canby, Estacada, Molalla River and Oregon Trail school districts, as well as to migrant students through our Migrant Education Program. Todos Juntos was honored as an Engage Every Student program champion by the U.S. Department of Education in summer 2024 for providing high-quality out-of-school learning opportunities for children in Clackamas County.



## Maximizing the use of a powerful student data tool

About 80 percent of Oregon school districts — including most of those in Clackamas County — use a system called Synergy to store student data. Clackamas ESD manages the Synergy contract for most of our regional school districts, and in 2024 we were pleased to host the Pacific Northwest Synergy Users Conference, an annual event to share information and support, and learn more about Synergy's capabilities. Nearly 400 information technology professionals from Oregon and Washington attended the two-day event. Most sessions were presented by district teams who offered first-hand learning on dozens of topics to help colleagues — and those new to their roles — maximize use of this data tool.

"This was the largest Northwest Synergy conference ever, and we had a waiting list of 100 additional people wanting to attend,"



said Jeremy Pietzold, Clackamas ESD chief information officer. "Our whole team really stepped up to make this conference a meaningful opportunity to better use an important data system that is so heavily relied on in our school districts."

## Legislators and school leaders gather to talk education

Prior to the 2024 legislative session, Clackamas ESD teamed up with Clackamas Community College to host a legislative breakfast, a rare chance for regional educators, students and board members to come together with our



lawmakers for conversation and learning. Ten legislators representing various portions of Clackamas County provided updates and priorities. CCC President Tim Cook and Clackamas ESD Superintendent Larry Didway also facilitated a panel discussion featuring CCC leaders and alumnae, as well as Molalla River School District Superintendent Tony Mann and 2022-23 Regional Teacher of the Year Ron Antlitz, a special education teacher at Alder Creek Middle School in Milwaukie.

The event helped showcase the connection between pre-K-12 education and Clackamas Community College, and was one more demonstration of our commitment to working together to create a system that caters to diverse needs by offering students multiple pathways and options to achieve their goals. It was heartening to feel the collective sense of opportunity and teamwork as we address continued challenges such as recruiting and maintaining a skilled workforce, and supporting the growing academic, behavioral and social/emotional needs of our students.

## Serving the technology needs of our region

Clackamas ESD is a trusted technology partner to schools and districts, government agencies and other organizations. We provide varying types of technology support to 10 Clackamas County school districts, and also hold data center service contracts with the following 37 local, regional and state entities. These strong partnerships reduce data center and equipment replacement costs, benefiting all clients.

- Cascade Heights Charter School
- Hermiston School District
- Christ the King School
- Hoodland Fire District
- City of Gladstone
- LaSalle Preparatory High School
- City of Happy Valley
- LINK Oregon
- City of Hillsboro
- Marylhurst Commons
- City of Milwaukie
- Multnomah Education Service District
- City of Oregon City
- Newberg School District
- City of Sandy
- Northwest Regional Education Service District
- City of West Linn
- Oregon Health & Science University
- Clackamas Community College
- Oregon Institute of Technology
- Clackamas County
- Park Academy
- Clackamas County Children's Commission
- Portland Public Schools
- Clackamas County Library System
- Reynolds School District
- Clackamas Fire District #1
- St. John the Apostle Catholic School
- Clackamas River Water
- State of Oregon – Department of Administrative Services
- Clackamas Water & Soil Conservation District
- Summit Learning Charter
- Good Shepherd Community School
- Sunrise Water
- Gresham-Barlow School District
- Yamhill-Carlton School District
- Harmony Academy



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