As we near the end of the calendar year, I have been thinking a great deal about educator voice and the critical role it plays in guiding my work. Throughout my career, I have relied heavily on the feedback, insights, and counsel of colleagues – especially classroom teachers. In my current role, it is more critical than ever that my work is directly informed by those who interact with our students every day.

Starting in January, I will meet with my recently-formed Teacher Advisory Committee. This group, which includes roughly 28 educators from across the state, will be convening several times a year to provide feedback and advice on key initiatives such as boosting our high school graduation rate, building a balanced assessment and accountability system, improving educational equity, and scaling best practices. These educators bring a wealth of experience as teacher leaders from elementary through higher education. They represent communities from Beaverton to Vale, Salem to Seaside. And I know that they will provide the critical, on-the-ground feedback that I need to help inform state-level policy decisions. I want to thank everyone who volunteered to participate in this committee. I greatly appreciate your commitment to improving our system and our services to kids.

While this committee will be incredibly valuable, there is no way for it to capture the insights of all of our educators, so I am excited that we will be administering the second statewide TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning) Oregon Survey this winter. Oregon first administered the TELL survey in 2014 and over 19,000 Oregon educators participated. We heard from educators in 62% of Oregon's schools and that baseline data was used both at the local and state level to inform school improvement efforts. In February, we will again be asking all licensed, school-based educators to share information on the teaching and learning conditions in their schools and what supports are needed to ensure success for each and every student. This is your opportunity to weigh in on topics such as the allocation of time; facilities and resources; student learning; community engagement; empowerment; school leadership; professional development; and mentoring. This survey is online and is completely voluntary, confidential, and anonymous. I want to encourage you and your colleagues to take the 20-30 minutes to let your voice be heard. Results will help guide and inform our efforts to improve the teaching and learning conditions in our schools.

Education never has been and never can be a one-size-fits-all system. Just as our students all come to school with their own challenges and promise, our schools and districts are all unique and have their own stories to tell. I want to hear from educators from every corner of our state so that we can best serve your needs and help you in supporting the success of each and every child. I look forward to talking with the educators who are volunteering their time to serve on my Teacher Advisory Committee and hearing from the rest of you through the upcoming TELL Oregon Survey. Thank you for adding your voice to this critical conversation and for helping to inform our work moving forward.

I wish you all a wonderful winter break surrounded by family and friends,
Story Time

Stories Highlighting Educational Success, Best Practice, and Innovation Around the State

Student-Centered Partnerships

Preparing students for success in college and the workplace takes all of us – schools, parents, and the broader community. Local Chambers of Commerce can play an important role in connecting students to the world of work through career-related learning and job exploration. Below are a few examples of partnerships supporting student career exploration.

Ready To Learn Ready To Work

Ready to Learn Ready to Work – a partnership between the Salem-Keizer School District, the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, E3, and the Keizer Chamber of Commerce – is designed to help prepare students for the demands of the workplace and college. Through work-based learning experiences, employers help make lessons come to life. Students learn first-hand about the skills, attitudes, and education required for a variety of careers. They are building a vision for their future.

Everyone has a role to play to help students succeed. Research shows community involvement in schools helps improve student attendance, grades, and graduation rates. Employers play a unique role in supporting the academic success of students through their expertise and resources. Throughout the Salem-Keizer community, employers are increasingly engaging with students to help them understand that what they learn in school is relevant to the workplace.

School to Career

The Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce works with area school districts to support student career exploration through the School to Career program. The program, which serves students in Washington County and beyond, facilitates career-related learning experiences for high schoolers through career days, career spotlight events, guest speakers, mock interviews, informational interviews, job shadows, and internships. The goal of the program is to prepare students for the realities of an increasingly competitive and global job market through work-based learning opportunities.

In the 2014-15 school year, the School to Career program served 5,400 students and they expect to serve over 6,000 this school year. Volunteers from the business community provide students with a first-hand look at a wide range of careers, exposing students to the skills needed for future success. Students learn valuable information about careers such as education requirements, job outlook, and salary range, as well as soft skills such as team work, communication, and work ethic. In addition, the program allows students to connect their classroom learning to future dreams and aspirations.

Photo Caption: Washington County students participate in Hillsboro’s School to Career program.
Youth Development Council Members

Governor Kate Brown has appointed six new members to the Oregon Youth Development Council, including Chair Celeste Janssen, the Executive Director of the Institute for Youth Success at Education Northwest. The Council is responsible for developing and implementing policies that re-engage those youth ages 16-24 who are not in school or working, and to engage younger youth ages 6-15 who may be on the trajectory to become disengaged from school and future workforce opportunities. Two more Council appointments, both youth members, will be announced in the near future. For more information, please contact Youth Development Council Director Iris Bell at 503-378-6250.

Indistar Training

Upcoming training opportunities are available for Indistar®, the state's adopted online planning tool used for district Continuous Improvement Planning (CIP) and School Improvement Planning (SIP, CAP, and Title I Schoolwide Planning). The first training will be held December 2 at South Coast ESD in Coos Bay (further information and registration can be found at here). The Northwest Regional ESD (NWRESD) is sponsoring review and continued training for districts in their region. Further information and registration for these trainings can be found on the NWRESD's Professional Development and Events website. Following are the dates and locations for these trainings:

- December 7: Tillamook County Service Center in Tillamook
- December 8: Columbia County Service Center in St. Helens
- December 15: Clatsop County Service Center in Astoria
- December 16: Washington County Service Center Regional Office in Hillsboro

This is an excellent opportunity for Districts with CIPs due June 30th to receive further training on the state’s Indistar® online planning tool and more comprehensive information around the CIP planning process and requirements. School planning teams will also benefit in completing their Title I school-wide plans. Please contact Carla Wade with any questions.

Every Student Succeeds Act

The long awaited reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to replace the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law is underway in Washington D.C. On December 2, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to approve the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by a strong bipartisan vote of 359-64. It is expected that the Senate will vote on the bill the week of December 7. The Obama Administration praised the action by the House of Representatives in passing the Every Student Succeeds Act and is calling on the Senate to take swift action on the legislation so that it can be signed into law before the end of the year. See highlights of the bill here.

With passage of the new law, ESEA waivers will expire on August 1, 2016; however, states will continue supporting “priority” and “focus” schools until 2017-2018 when the new accountability requirements begin. School ratings and interventions will start with school year 2017-18. The 2016-17 school year will be a transition year. Starting this winter/spring 2016 and extending into the coming school year, we will be bringing together stakeholders to help ODE develop our State Plan which will outline how this new bill will be implemented in Oregon. In January 2016, ODE will share a rollout timeline and plans for the development of Oregon’s State Plan to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Watch for upcoming information on ESSA and development of the State Plan in future Education Updates.
Upcoming Opportunities

Articles and Resources on Scholarships, Grants, Professional Development, and More…

Mathematics and Science Teaching Award

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) is the highest recognition that a mathematics or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. If you know great teachers, nominate them to join this prestigious network of professionals. The 2016 nomination period for K-6 grade mathematics and science teachers is currently open. Anyone may nominate exceptional math or science teachers teaching grades K-6 for the award year. Teachers may also apply directly at www.paemst.org. The nomination deadline is April 1, 2016. For more information about the awards, click here. For questions about the nomination or application process, please contact Jaime Rumage.

National Youth Science Camp

The National Youth Science Camp is a residential science education program for young scientists the summer after they graduate from high school. Students from around the country are challenged academically in exciting lectures and hands-on studies, and have voluntary opportunities to participate in an outdoor adventure program, gain a new and deep appreciation for the great outdoors, and establish friendships that last a lifetime. Applications are now being accepted and must be received by February 17th, 2016. For additional science updates, please visit the Science Newsletter Updates.

IntegratED and AcceleratED

The Organization for Educational Technology and Curriculum (OETC) is hosting two learning conferences for educators in February, outlined below. AcceleratED is a one-day professional development conference focused on technology integration strategies for educational administrators on February 24, 2016 at the Portland Airport Sheraton. IntegratED is a two-day, hands-on teaching and learning event focused on technology integration strategies for educators on February 25 and 26, 2016 at the Portland Airport Sheraton.

Student Grants and Scholarships

Students statewide are encouraged to apply for grants and scholarships on the Office of Student Access and Completion (OSAC) website now through March 1, 2016. OSAC awards more than $80 million dollars each year in grants and privately funded scholarships to help students meet their college expenses. Students should apply online at OregonStudentAid.gov and complete the OSAC scholarship application by March 1 at 5 pm. Students who submit their applications by February 15 may be eligible to win a $1,000 OSAC Early Bird scholarship. Students are also strongly encouraged to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Oregon State Aid Application (ORSAA) as soon as possible beginning January 1, 2016.