



Ray Smith of Lead and Learn

The recipe for school improvement: Creating Momentum at the ESD Level

By Jane Elder Wulff

“School improvement” can be a slippery concept. No one would argue that schools should not be improved. It’s what that means and how it’s done that can fire up discussion.

Click on “School Improvement Training Events” on the home page of MESD’s website, and you’ll find these questions addressed in sessions with names like “AVID Counselor Workshop” and “Professional Learning Community Coaches Training.” What’s that about?

As MESD’s new coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction, **Judy Custy** has taken on the challenging task of making sure everyone working with the agency on recent state school improvement initiatives shares an understanding of programs like AVID and Professional Learning Communities, and is collaborating to move these programs forward in local schools.

MESD is currently working with four school districts - David Douglas, Gresham-Barlow, Parkrose, and Reynolds - to advance these initiatives.

“Judy is helping to bring all our districts together,” says **Teresa Ketelsen**, longtime teacher and principal and now curriculum director at Gresham-Barlow. “She provides a hub of information from the ESD level. We’re all new directors, and she’s an enormous help in keeping communication going.”

Advancing research-based programs

Judy explains that while improvement plans have been required for a number of years at school district and individual school levels, in 2006 the Oregon legislature took a major step forward, dedicating funds specifically toward improving academic achievement among secondary students.



These funds are helping districts and schools implement strongly advocated research-based programs that are changing lives for students and teachers nationwide. A portion of the funding supports the work of regional ESDs in coordinating these efforts among their districts, helping them develop a common focus and ensuring that all programs in each community have the same level of support at the regional level.

AVID, for example, is an elective program designed to help middle school and high school students consider college - average academic achievers who may be setting their sights too low, who care about their education and want to succeed but are working against odds. The name stands for “Advancement Via Individual Determination.”

Developed in 1980 by a California teacher with her class of 32 students, AVID now serves nearly 300,000 students in more than 3,500 schools across the country. Many of these students are the first in their families to attend college, and the program offers opportunities for parents to become part of the process.

see *Momentum* - continued on page 2



“We see AVID kids taking ownership and responsibility for their learning, not just seeing it as the teacher’s job. We’re teaching students to be their own advocates, preparing them for college by giving them access to rigorous AP (*Advanced Placement*) courses in high school.”

Teresa Ketelsen, Gresham-Barlow Curriculum Director



Students spend time each week in lessons and small-group tutorials, learning to dig deeper by asking questions about whatever wasn’t clear to them in class.

“The tutors don’t tell them the answer,” says Teresa. “They have to come up with it themselves.” Everyone takes notes, even those who understood the questions to start with, and by the end they all know more than they thought they did.

She emphasizes that AVID must be the student’s choice. “They can’t be forced into it. They have to want to be there - they have to feel committed. It’s rigorous. They’re pushing themselves. Their cohort stays together year after year, on into high school, doing a lot of college readiness together, getting help with college and scholarship applications.”

The difference in high school can be startling. Teresa tells of a brand-new high school teacher, unaware of the AVID program, who was approached early in the school year by one of his students.

“The student said in order for us to learn, you have to be doing such and such. He was trying to help his teacher out, help him be more effective in the classroom. That was an ‘aha!’ moment for the teacher, knowing he was working with kids who were eager to learn.”

Something new: a unity of focus

Thanks to MESD coordination, if this student moves to another school or another district, he’ll find students who share his experience and his goals. Judy notes that with newly dedicated state funding, all four school districts working with MESD are focusing their improvement efforts on AVID for middle and high school students and increased AP course offerings for high school students.

In addition, Professional Learning Communities train educators to focus on learning as well as teaching, and provide support for school teams to review data, improve plans, and enhance student achievement. Much of Judy’s work involves setting up and supervising training for teams from MESD schools and districts in a two-year inservice program called Professional Learning Community Academy.

In a third initiative, federally funded through the state, she facilitates training for regional ESD staff on developing effective data teams and using data to support improvement plans. Since funds became available for these three initiatives only last year, local results aren’t yet in, but educators in all four districts are excited about the training, the student response, and the possibilities.

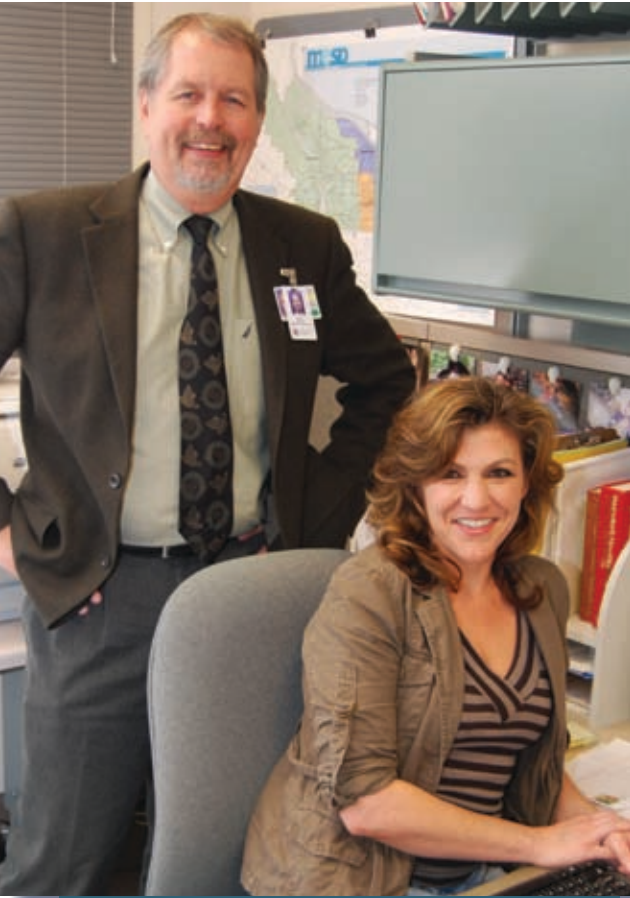
As superintendent for student learning at Evergreen School District in Vancouver, Judy worked with the Harvard School of



Education on a five-year, \$10 million school improvement grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She retired from Evergreen but was not ready to quit working - “I’m a farm girl,” she laughs. “It was natural to make this transition.”

She explains that Washington state funding does not support the collaborative approach to school improvement recently funded in Oregon. “It’s exciting to be here, exciting to see this very deliberate regional cooperation.”

She points out that sharing resources encourages collaboration instead of competition. From middle schoolers untangling string theory to teachers in regional training workshops, MESD’s learners at every level are discovering the truth of this lesson for themselves. ■



Teacher Reflection:

For this MESD employee, Alpha High was a breath of fresh air

By Jodi Seaburn

Back in the days of wearing shoulder padded crop tops, listening to Def Leopard, The Clash, Men at Work, and watching movies like Fast Times at Ridgemont High and Flash Dance, you would find me “like totally” rocking out and hangin with friends - fur sure. 1983 seems like forever and a day ago, but I will never forget my time at Alpha High School.

My senior year was a very tough time after I made the decision to transfer from a private school to public school. Gresham High was a total shock to my system. Unfortunately, they did not accept all my hard work at the private school and I found myself credit deficient and needing to push myself extra hard in order to graduate. With my counselor too busy to give me the encouragement and direction I desperately needed, the peer pressures and vast freedom, I ended up calling it quits and dropping out in the spring. That’s when Alpha High came to the rescue.

Alpha was a complete breath of fresh air. With **Kelvin Webster, George Vance, Al Martin, Carol French, and Peter Bach** as the Alpha Staff, I was geared up to succeed! Kelvin assisted me with goals and helped me transition smoothly into their program. With the smaller classrooms and student-to-teacher ratio, I was able to get the support and direction I needed to get back on track. Their school-to-work program provided incredible vocational skills that enabled me to land a part-time job from one of our very own job sites. In the Fall of 1983 I had met my mark, I graduated!

Alpha will always have a special place in my heart because they not only gave me the support and guidance I needed to graduate but it was also where I met my high school sweetheart - now my husband of 23 years. **!**

Editor’s note: Jodi Seaburn is the secretary for MESD’s Department of Instructional Services. Jodi is also among just a few MESD employees who is a graduate of one of our schools. In fact, one of her teachers way back then was Kelvin Webster, now director of the department in which Jodi works. Interaction thanks Jodi and Kelvin for graciously accepting our invitation to write about their shared experience at Alpha.

Alpha provided an incredible opportunity for a young teacher

By Kelvin Webster

When I look back on my career in education (30+ years) and think about the various places that I have worked, Alpha holds a very special place on that list. I had an incredible opportunity given to me in the summer of 1980, when I was hired by **Al Martin** and **Jack Beck** to be a learning manager (teacher) for a new school (which became Alpha High School) that was in the process of being designed by Multnomah ESD.

The first few months on the job had us scrounging garage sales for furniture for our new school, which was located about the Gresham City Chamber of Commerce and working with the Northwest Regional Laboratory to learn about a model program they had developed and piloted in Tigard called Experience Based Career Education (EBCE).

EBCE is based on the philosophy that students can be successful if they find relevant connections to their learning needs and academic skill development through work site explorations and internships. This approach still serves as the core framework for the educational program at Alpha today.

To this day I still look back on my time at Alpha and the students with whom I worked (like Jodi) and reflect how possible it was to have a real and positive impact on students and the choices that they had before them, one of the major reasons many of us go into education in the first place. I consider myself lucky that Alpha afforded me the opportunity to make a choice that profoundly impacted my beliefs about the educational needs of young people, which has served me well over my career. **!**



I Love my job

“In the right place, doing the right thing”

by Emily Wittman, Special Education Teacher, Wynne Watts School

In June of 2006, I found out MESD was taking over Wynne Watts School, which, at the time, was a private school with Albertina Kerr Centers. I was told that I would need to apply with MESD to keep my job. I was a bit worried that everything would change, and maybe not for the better. I had to think about whether or not to apply for the teaching job and stay at the school that I had worked at for 5 years. Did I want to continue to work with students in residential and day treatment for mental health issues? Was I ready to move on, or was there more that I had left to give? Did I still love my job? Did I love it enough to stay?


As I weighed the pros and cons of working with a high needs population, I discovered several things about why I love my job so much. One, my job provided me an opportunity to give back, especially to a segment of the student population that is often overlooked. Although working with students with high needs is difficult and demanding, my skill set matches the students' needs. In addition, I get something back from my students - enjoyment from seeing them succeed at difficult tasks, pride when they move on to public school, and the everyday give-and-take that happens between teachers and students.

The second thing I realized about why I loved my job is that I very much enjoyed working in the setting of a specialized school. All of the teachers at Wynne Watts are special education teachers and we have created a community where we share ideas and support each other. Also, we “speak the same language,” meaning we all have things in common - similar students, simi-

lar responsibilities (i.e. paperwork, documentation, etc), and similar experiences in the classroom. This does not happen for many special education teachers out in the public school setting, where they are often the only, or one of a couple, special education teachers in their buildings. In my school, there are 4 special education teachers, 7 educational assistants, a principal, and an office assistant, all of whom make our community an excellent place to work.

Thirdly, I thought I would enjoy working with MESD. Previously, although Wynne Watts was a private school, there was a consultant from MESD who worked with us, especially regarding special education procedure and law. Because this partnership had worked so well, Albertina

Kerr Centers saw the value of MESD running the school. It was through my discussions with the MESD consultant (the last one being Pat Haley), that I realized that our small community that we had built within the school would only be strengthened by the wider community of MESD.

Over the last two years with MESD, I have come to realize that I definitely made the right decision to stay. I love all the aspects of my job - the students, my co-workers at the school and the larger teaching and service community of MESD. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't love all aspects of my job all of the time, and some of the challenges of working with students with high needs can take a toll, but all in all, when I really sit and contemplate everything about my job, I know that I am in the right place, doing the right thing. 

“I get something back from my students - enjoyment from seeing them succeed at difficult tasks, pride when they move on to public school, and the everyday give-and-take that happens between teachers and students.”



Workplace giving update: E² Foundation Scholarships to open new doors for students served by MESD

By Lori Luckart & Kim Silva

Sometimes a small but timely investment pays big dividends. This is the concept guiding a new scholarship program for students served by MESD schools and programs.

After 25 years of operating the Academic All-Stars scholarship program, MESD and the E² Foundation have made a significant change in direction. Whereas Academic All-Stars rewarded the highest scholastic achievers in 19 traditional high schools, our new scholarship program will reach the students for whom our scholarships will make a real difference.

The new E² Scholarship is geared toward fulfilling the MESD mission and meeting the needs of students with whom MESD staff members work - at-risk students, facing multiple obstacles, and for whom college is often just a dream.

The E² Scholarship will serve the promising, nontraditional students the MESD serves. These students include those in these MESD programs:

Alternative Education: Low income, at-risk, students who are the first generation in their families to attend college.

Special Education: Students with physical, emotional, and mental challenges who need added value opportunities to take advantage of achieving independence and self-sufficiency.


Migrant Education: Students from migrant families who face cultural and economic barriers.

Through the E² Scholarships, we will work with MESD employees to identify students who will benefit from and deserve a vote of monetary confidence. These students will apply to the program with help from their MESD advisors. We are planning to partner with other organizations to implement the program in an effort to expand our fundraising opportunities, minimize costs, and to provide more services to our students.

For the past 15 years, many of our MESD employees have generously supported the Academic All Stars program. We really could not have been so successful without you and thank you for your support.

As we kick off this year's Workplace Giving program, we hope you will consider making a donation to this new program.

"The dollars I contribute through work place giving have the opportunity to go directly towards supporting our program goals for the students that we work with - students that have some of the highest needs and greatest potential. I can't think of anything that doesn't epitomize more the saying 'put your money where your mouth is,'" says **Kelvin Webster**, Director of Instructional Services and E² Scholarship donor.

You may designate your gift to whatever program you choose, but I encourage you to consider designating a portion of your gift to the E² Scholarship. Together, we can make a difference for many more students. With payroll deduction you can donate on a monthly basis. A pledge form can be obtained by going to the MESD website, or calling **Susan Korst** with E² Foundation - 503.257.1570. 



Around the Agency

New digs in the future for MESD's Hospital Program:

Shriners Hospital for Children, located on Marquam Hill adjacent to OHSU, has begun a two-year expansion project. The construction will include additional new patient rooms and the relocation of several other Hospital departments. MESD's Hospital School will get a new classroom and office space as part of the project. MESD Hospital Teacher **Eric Prasoloff** is working with the architects and Shriners administration to design the new classroom space. The groundbreaking celebration event took place on Saturday, September 20. Eric and MESD Education Assistant **Glenda Bracelin** attended the ceremony and gave tours of the current classroom to dignitaries and visitors. The highlight was a short speech given by a Shriners patient with whom Glenda and Eric worked to help compose his remarks and hone his public speaking skills... all as a part of the instructional program of the Hospital School. MESD Superintendent **Ron Hitchcock** attended the ceremony and got to see Eric and Glenda in their finest hour.

Final approval for School Health: The Oregon Department of Human Services has received MESD's final acceptance to become a "Delegate Agency" which enables the agency to order VFC vaccine from the state and maintain supplies for MESD nurses who run the immunization clinics in district schools. As a result, greater efficiencies will be realized by MESD immunization staff in the preparation and delivery of immunization clinics throughout our districts.

FLS forges ahead: Pathways Community School (PCS) continues to develop effective partnerships and alliances as they forge ahead at their new site in Gresham. Staff want to issue a great big "thanks and job well done" goes to the MESD Facilities Department. They have been working hard at PCS to make our building more accessible to our students, staff and the public. The site now has an automatic ADA (American Disabilities Act) door that facilitates transitions for student transportation. Sidewalks have been extended which allows for safer and easier loading and unloading of the buses. In addition, more is on the way with the opening of our greenhouse and deck.

Career planning at Helensview: Two of staff members, **Gillian Davis** and **April Ard**, went to Corvallis for a workshop geared towards contractors to showcase training facilities that are available for students which can segue into an apprenticeship position with the Laborers Union. In addition, a group of Helensview students volunteered at the Rebuilding Center organizing materials that were donated. While there they removed nails from boards that were going to be used in an upcoming workshop. Helensview is pleased to announce that we have started a book study club for the students. This trimester the book selection is *Baby Girl* by author Lenora Adams

Curriculum and School Improvement stays ultra-busy:

October was a very busy month for the program. Staff hosted the Oregon Teacher Mentor training, a two day event that includes staff development specialists, administrators and instructional coaches from the northern part of Oregon. During this same week, they coordinated a state OAESD-Educational Enterprise Steering Committee DATA Strand 2 training, as part of the Oregon DATA project on the use of data and the development of school improvement plans. 75 school staff attended representing many parts of the state. The training was presented by the Leadership and Learning Center. Only one week later **Penny Pavala** facilitated 45 MESD teachers who convened here at MESD for two days to learning writing scoring techniques. To get a quick snapshot of professional development work sponsored by MESD, visit MESD website and click on Staff Training / School Improvement - <http://www.mesd.k12.or.us/si/>.

For more about Multnomah Education Service District's programs, people, and community go to:

www.mesd.k12.or.us



Arata tree planting: Arata Creek School is in partnership with the City of Troutdale, HHPR-Harper, Houf, Peterson, Righellis Inc., for the SOLV (Stop Oregon Litter & Vandalism) Project; Watershed Improvement Project to improve the campus environment. John Gordon met with teachers on September 18 to review the project. A representative with SOLV met with students to teach them about environmental issues and to discuss the project. Students worked the week of October 6-10 planting 300 trees on the banks of Arata Creek.

INTERACTION

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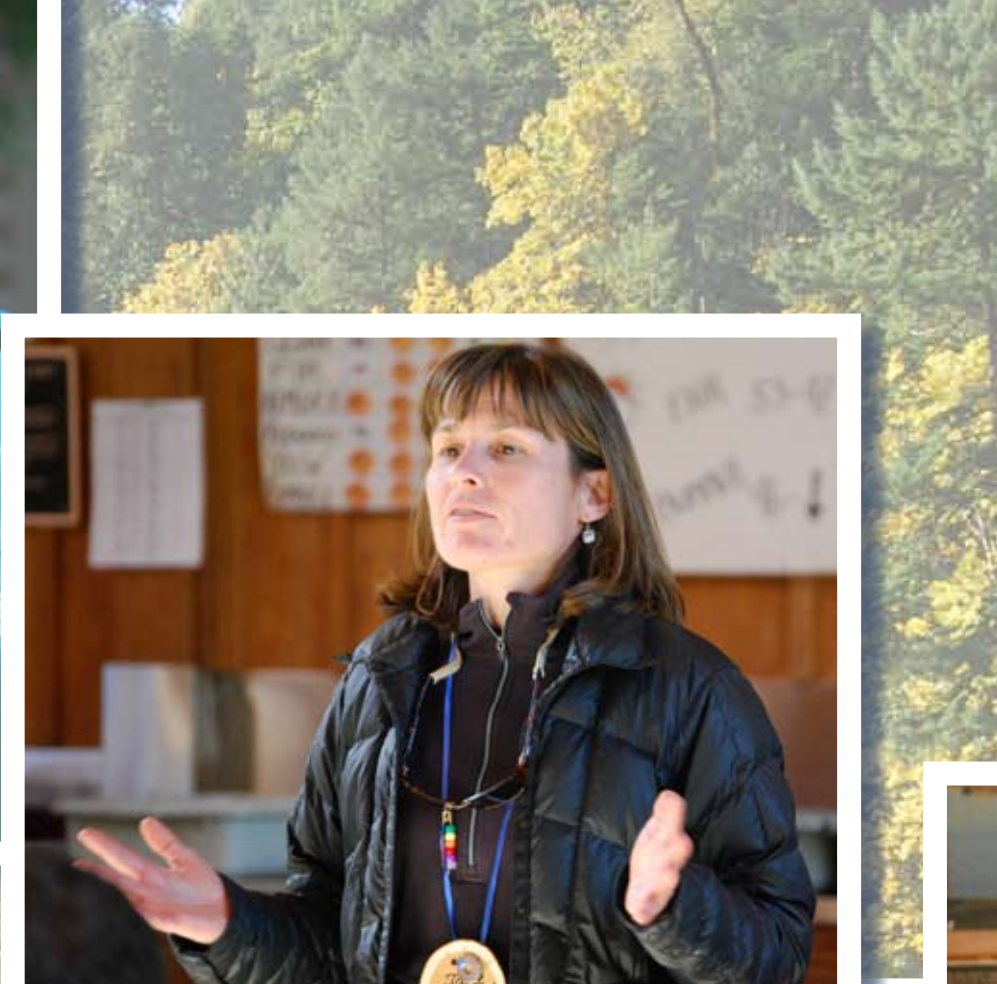
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Outdoor School Field Day



On a sparkling October day, MESD's Friends of Outdoor School and the E² Foundation hosted a field day for current and potential ODS supporters. Among the guests pictured were (clockwise, lower left to lower right) MESD Board member Geri Washington, MESD Board member Sean Schafer, Jane Bacchieri of Governor Kulongoski's office and Rex Burkholder, Metro Councilor.