

Candidate Tracker

For OSEA Candidate Interviews

With this OSEA Candidate Tracker Form, you will be asking and recording a candidate's views on issues important to public education and labor. Each candidate being interviewed is running for an elected seat in the Oregon legislature and is seeking OSEA's endorsement and financial support.

Candidate's Name

District

Interviewer's Name

Chapter

Interview Location

Date

Ask the **HARD** questions
and **Get** the **ANSWERS**



**Oregon School
Employees Association**

4735 Liberty Rd S • Salem, OR 97302-1027
(503) 588-0121 • (800) 252-6732 • www.osea.org

Interview Questions

Questions to Ask Candidates During Interview

Provided below is an outline of each of OSEA’s priorities/issues with corresponding questions. The questions were prepared by the Government Relations Office.

This process ensures that all candidates are asked the exact same questions at every interview, maintaining a fair and consistent interview process.

Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten Funding

The Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten program provides comprehensive preschool education and family support services to Oregon’s lowest income, highest need three- and four-year old children and their families. Federal law requires that funding for these programs is directed to program slots (i.e., number of eligible children served), so additional funding adds children to the program while cuts in funding must be made by reducing the number of eligible children served rather than reducing program services. Families having incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible and participate on a voluntary basis.

Research has shown that these programs are very good investments with a high degree of success. For every dollar spent on these programs, governments save more than seven dollars in future education, human resource, and public safety costs. This proven record of success inspired the legislature in the 1990s to pass ORS 329.160 requiring full funding of Prekindergarten programs for all eligible children by 2004.

The 2007 Legislature increased funding for Oregon Head Start/OPK programs, raising the percentage of eligible children who can participate from 57% to 75%. Funding for 80% of eligible children is considered full funding because approximately 20% of eligible children will choose not to participate. However, when inflation and the failing economy created an increased number of children eligible for the program, budget leaders were unable to completely close the gap. OSEA supports state funding of Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten programs at the level sufficient to provide slots for 80% of eligible children, which is considered full funding.

1. Will you support and advocate for full funding of Oregon’s Head Start Prekindergarten program for all eligible children? Provide an explanation of the candidate’s response.

Community Colleges Funding

Community colleges are the key access point for Oregonians seeking a post-secondary education. They provide an opportunity for students to advance their education levels and acquire new skills regardless of their starting point. Community colleges are the leading choice for high school graduates seeking a post-secondary education. The Oregon University System's recently released study, "Where Have Oregon's Graduates Gone?" reports nearly half of all Oregon high school students who enrolled at an in-state post-secondary institution chose a community college. Additionally, community colleges are the primary providers of workforce training for both emerging and adult workers. Oregon's community colleges provide an entry point for students interested in workforce training, professional certificates, or two or four-year degrees.

State appropriations to Oregon's 17 community colleges grew in the 1990s as the number of students seeking post-secondary education and workforce training increased. However, funding for increased enrollment masked the fact that the state's funding per full-time equivalent student was not keeping up. Following a substantial decline in 2001-03, the state's investment per student has only recently achieved the levels seen in the 1990s.

The impact of the budget reductions has been addressed in two ways: program reductions and tuition increases. Both of these adjustments make it more difficult for students to get the community college services they need. Oregon community colleges have not had sufficient funding to keep up with the demand for courses. In 2005-06, 7% fewer course sections were offered than in 2001-02. Over the first five years of this decade, average community college tuition rose 61%. Oregon community college tuition ranked third highest of the 15 western states at the beginning of the 2007-09 biennium.

Oregon has new goals for educational attainment by 2025: 20% of residents with a high school diploma, 40% with a post-secondary credential or associate's degree, and 40% with a bachelor's degree or higher. However, according to the Community College and Workforce Development Department, Oregonians 25 to 34 years old were less likely to have earned a degree than Oregon adults 45 to 54 years old in 2005; the chance of an Oregon high school graduate going to college by age 19 is less today than ten years ago (2004 compared to 1994); and the average statewide community college tuition rose 99% in ten years.

The 2007-09 funding request made by community colleges was \$529 million, or \$2961 per student. This budget request assumed enrollment of 178,842 students during 2007-09. The legislatively-approved budget at \$500 million takes the state support for students to \$2,778, the highest level since 1994. While the budget increase for community colleges was a welcome and important first step in reversing the decline in program offerings and increases in tuition community colleges have seen in the last decade—it is only a first step if we are to ever achieve the quality post-secondary system Oregonians need and the law requires.

One problem that has historically hampered policy makers in determining an adequate state appropriation for community colleges has been a lack of system-wide data that could be used to determine what is needed to meet the educational attainment goals for Oregonians that now exist in the law. To fill this information gap, Governor Kulongoski recently established the Post-Secondary Quality Education Commission, which will develop a model of reasonable costs for provision of post-secondary education and provide that model in time to develop the 2009-11 budget request. OSEA supports funding public post-secondary education at the level determined by the Post-Secondary Quality Education Commission as sufficient to allow public post-secondary institutions to offer a quality, affordable education to Oregonians.

Staff Development

OSEA supports policies that promote safe, healthy learning environments with fully-trained, high-quality career professionals serving the educational needs of students.

Oregon's public school system developed over time with an eye toward creating a complete environment in which all children can be provided what they need to learn and develop to their greatest potential.

This unique environment was created because, unlike adults, children cannot be made responsible for the multitude of tasks necessary to provide for their needs throughout the day. In order to assure parents of the safety and security of their children and that quality instruction is provided, school leaders long ago determined that trustworthy professionals should perform these tasks. In most cases in districts throughout the state, these trusted staff members are fellow community members and neighbors of the parents sending their students to school. Parents have come to expect and trust that when their children enter this environment, they will be safe and well cared for while they learn.

For many years, policy makers and school districts have recognized continuing professional development for teachers and administrators as an important component in a high quality school environment. Congress, in the No Child Left Behind Act, recognized the need for highly-trained educators when it required increased skill levels for teachers and educational assistants to assure they are "highly qualified" to teach students. This new requirement was not funded and the "highly qualified" status of educational assistants is not automatically transferable from one district to another.

Not everyone has recognized the significant impact classified employees can have on students and the need to train each of them to assure students receive the appropriate and high quality education services they have been promised. Today, there is a wide disparity between districts, and even within districts, in the amount and quality of training and professional development opportunities provided to classified staff. This lack of professional development training can lead to reduced academic support to students, including those identified as special needs students, and increased employee dissatisfaction and turnover, along with the resulting loss of productivity. OSEA is currently working with other education stakeholders on legislation for consideration in the 2009 session that would increase the amount and quality of professional development for all education staff.

4a. Will you support and advocate for mandatory professional development for classified staff working in K12 schools? Provide an explanation of the candidate's response.

About OSEA

A Member's Union

The Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) was founded in 1938 when a small group of school janitors joined together to form an “association” to promote their trade and provide job-related training. Today, OSEA is a member-controlled and directed Union that reflects the character and spirit of its members, who individually and collectively are responsible for its identity and success.

OSEA represents over 20,000 educational employees working in Oregon school districts, community colleges, education service districts, Head Start agencies, libraries, and park and recreation districts. As one of the largest labor unions in Oregon, and with the second largest membership of educational staff, OSEA is a recognized leader within the state's labor and education community.

OSEA Members

The membership of the Oregon School Employees Association consists of secretaries; special education, instructional, and library assistants; custodians; maintenance workers; groundskeepers; bus drivers; couriers; food service workers; nurses; teachers; physical and occupational therapists; interpreters (deaf, hearing impaired, ESL); vision specialists; campus security; braillists; reproduction specialists; computer technicians; ABE instructors; and district office staff, such as bookkeepers and payroll and accounting clerks. In addition to the diversity of workers represented today, OSEA has also expanded its mission and goals from those of an “association” to those of a fully developed “labor Union.”

Offices

The OSEA State Headquarters is located in Salem. OSEA also has eight field offices located in Central Oregon, Eastern Oregon, Eugene, North Coast, Hermiston, Portland, South Coast, and Southern Oregon. These offices are the work location for over 40 professional OSEA staff dedicated to meeting the needs of Chapters and the membership.

Resources

OSEA resources are used to develop and implement statewide programs, events, and activities; assist Chapters and members with contract negotiations, contract administration, and internal and external organizing; and create/distribute member communications. OSEA also develops/presents job and Union-related trainings/workshops and promotes and protects the interests of members in the political, legislative, and public policy arena through education, political action, and lobbying.

National Affiliations

OSEA joined AFT, becoming Local 6732, on February 12, 2008. The affiliation brings to culmination a long standing working relationship between the two organizations. OSEA is also a founding member of the American Association of Classified School Employees (AACSE).

For more information, visit the OSEA website at www.osea.org.