



- Courtesy photo

Roseburg educator rewarded for DATA drive

[DD BIXBY](#)
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A local educator has received a national award for her work to improve the use of data collected in schools to boost student performance.

On Jan. 29, Mickey Garrison of Roseburg was named 2009 State Data Director of the Year by the Data Quality Campaign, a national organization striving to improve the use of information in education.

Garrison's work with the Direct Access to Achievement program, dubbed the Oregon DATA Project, drew applause from the Washington, D.C.-based organization.

Garrison served as principal at Fullerton IV Elementary until becoming school improvement director for the Education Enterprise Steering Committee in 2006.

EESC is a partnership between the Oregon Department of Education, education service districts around the state, K-12 schools, higher education and the Oregon Governor's Office.

"The charge I was given was to work with these agencies and staffs of these groups to create a network that would also create a network for school improvement for our state," she said last week by phone. "It's very humbling. Honestly, when you look at any work that has this level of impact, it really takes a team to drive that."

Garrison does a lot of her own driving, too, and in the past three years has traveled across the state almost 30 times, according to the letter Doug Kosty, assistant superintendent of ODE's assessment and information services, wrote in nominating the local woman for the national award.

She said her husband, Douglas County Circuit Judge Randy Garrison, hitches up the RV on the weekends so the couple can find a meeting point between wherever she is and Roseburg.

Through early networking, Mickey Garrison said educators said they needed to know how to use all the data they received and collected.

"That became the driver for the Oregon DATA Project — looking at what the numbers mean and determining priorities and how to make the investments so all students are successful in whatever they want to do," she said.

After all, she said, there are six data warehouses in Oregon chock-full of information on academic and behavioral performance, and breaking that volume of data down for translation in classrooms can be daunting.

"Those are tools, but tools don't tell you what you do next — they just give you information," Garrison said.

Charan Cline, director of student achievement at the Douglas ESD, works with Garrison to administer the regional sustainability grant of the Oregon DATA Project to help districts and teachers bring data usage into classrooms.

“The thing with Mickey is she's very focused,” Cline said. “She has a very clear picture in her brain on what she can do to improve education and schools.”

He said the grant is developing teams to help individual teachers analyze the information and adjust instruction to meet students' needs.

“That's where education really needs to go and she's doing a good job of trying to push us there,” Cline said.

Douglas ESD is working closely with the Oakland School District and its teachers.

Dan Forbess, Oakland's superintendent, said the district's elementary has been using a direct instructional model called “Success for All” for nine years, which has teachers gauging students' reading skills on a quarterly basis instead of just relying on state assessments.

The superintendent thinks that elementary model set them up for the Oregon DATA Project's attempt to align the use of data across all grade levels, which means training with both Cline and Garrison.

Forbess said one thing he walked away with from the last training session under Garrison was the relationship of cause and effect.

“The kids are there like sponges for us to impart our knowledge on them,” he said. “We're the one's causing the effect for them, so we better be using data and setting some clear goals to help that cause and effect.”

Professional development was one of the first items on the chopping block in last year's budget cuts, so the Oregon DATA Project workshops are a nice boost, Forbess said.

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