



Oregon Small Schools Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OSSA names 2025 Principal of the Year from Columbia County

Vernonia, OR – The Oregon Small Schools Association (OSSA) is proud to announce that Ms. Michelle Eagleson has been named its 2025 Principal of the Year. Ms. Eagleson is the principal of Vernonia Elementary School part of the Vernonia School District, located in Vernonia Oregon, in Columbia County.

Dr. Jim Helmen Vernonia School District Superintendent wrote: “It is with great pride and deep admiration that I nominate Michelle Eagleson for the Oregon Small Schools Association Principal of the Year award. Michelle has dedicated the past 30 years of her career to Vernonia Elementary School, where she has not only been a transformative leader but also a beacon of resilience and innovation for students, staff, and the broader community. Michelle has led Vernonia Elementary through some of the most challenging times in its history, including two devastating floods that displaced hundreds of students and staff. Throughout these crises, she demonstrated unwavering leadership, ensuring that every student had access to education and emotional support, even when their learning environments were uprooted. She played a pivotal role in organizing teacher teams to support the social-emotional health and safety of students and families, ensuring that learning and well-being remained priorities.”

Superintendent Helmen added: “Her leadership has not only transformed Vernonia Elementary School but has created an environment where students are excited to come to school every day, eager to learn, and filled with a sense of belonging. Parents share in this enthusiasm, knowing their children are thriving in a school that is safe, nurturing, and deeply invested in their success. Michelle’s impact extends far beyond the walls of her school—she has set a new standard for what is possible in small schools across Oregon. “

OSSA recognizes one principal each year who excels in his/her leadership position. Criteria include integrity, leadership, commitment to community, scholarship and student achievement. The OSSA Board of Directors is very happy to honor Mrs. Michelle Eagleson this year celebrating all that she has accomplished.

Michelle will be presented the Principal of the Year award at the OSSA spring Conference on April 18th, 2025 at the Salishan Resort.

OSSA recognizes one school administrator each year who excels in his/her leadership position. Criteria include integrity, leadership, commitment to community, scholarship and student achievement. OSSA serves as an advocate for the benefits of rural education and small schools across the state. For more information, visit the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators website click the link to the Oregon Small Schools Association@ www.oregonssa.org. or Michael Carter, OSSA Executive Director@ carter.michael@lakeview.k12.or.us or call 541-947-3347.

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