



For Immediate Release  
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## **Gary Peterson Receives Individual Achievement Award From Association of Educational Service Agencies**

Gary Peterson, past executive director of the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts (OAESD), has received the 2023 Outstanding Individual Achievement Award from the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs). The award recognizes individual contributions to advancing regional educational programs at the regional, state or national levels. The award was presented at the AESAs Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA.

The award recognizes Peterson's work with the OAESD, specifically taking the agency through a strategic planning update and for unifying the OAESD Network by ensuring that all 19 educational service districts became members of the network.

"This is such a wonderful opportunity for me to talk about an old friend. It is with pride and respect to honor a visionary leader. He is a steward of progress and innovation," said Joan Wade, AESAs Executive Director.

"Under Gary's guidance the network experienced exceptional growth," she continued.

Amber Eaton, Executive Director of the OAESD, nominated Peterson for the award.

"Gary does an incredible job of finding ways for ESDs to be relevant and flexible while staying true to our mission/vision," Eaton said, "He is able to craft and respond to requests for regional service models that has allowed every single ESD in Oregon to benefit financially in their own organizations while collectively at OAESD we are filling the needs of the state. The relationships that have been built have allowed us to be key players at many more tables than before which continues to benefit the whole of the organization and ESDs as individuals."

As part of the strategic planning update, Peterson implemented the creation of by-laws for the association, establishing a road map of norms for the Oregon ESD Network.

"This set of agreements supports healthy relationships among ESDs; this was a dire need after a period of confusion, competition, and opposition. He was able to heal the network and help us step forward together in our goals and philosophies," said representatives of all the members of the OAESD Network, who also nominated Peterson for the award.

Peterson was also cited for responding to heightened racial tensions by bringing together state leaders to form an Equity Steering Committee which led to the creation of the OAESD Equity



# AESA

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Position Statement, Core Beliefs, and Recommendations for actions. These documents have been replicated throughout Oregon and center the network's current and future projects.

He was also recognized for his efforts in bringing research backed practices in leadership to Oregon's ESDs as a McREL balanced leadership trainer. Another achievement was the establishment of a Program Cabinet for OAESD, an arm of the OAESD Superintendent Council which manages and guides program development in the state and provides guidance and leadership to the association's Program Administrator. Structured as a partnership between OAESD leaders and the Oregon Department of Education, this group has been transformative for the work of ESDs, contributing contract opportunities and program guidance to all ESDs in the state.

Peterson was also praised for nurturing relationships with state legislators, and more deeply integrating the often invisible and service-oriented work of ESDs into legislative processes and planning.