



# PARKROSE SCHOOL DISTRICT Superintendent's Corner

JUNE 2017

I have had the privilege of working with Parkrose School District Board of Education board member Ed Grassel since I became the superintendent of the district in 2007. In fact, the first time I ever met Ed, I was still superintendent of the Coos Bay School District where I

had been for 17 years and he and his board member colleagues were there visiting the district as part of their superintendent search. Ed and I made a firm and fast connection that has never changed. Let me tell you a little about Mr. Grassel and why I am going to miss him so very much when he retires from the board after 12 years of service to our community on June 30th.

Ed is the most dedicated man I have ever met. He graduated from Parkrose High School as did his father before him. His folks came to Parkrose in the 1930s and they have loved Parkrose ever since. His folks live next door to him and his wife of many years, Jan Grassel, a retired teacher. His children graduated from Parkrose High School. He has bled green and black all his life.

In Ed Grassel, I found my mentor-never afraid to tell the truth, always passionate about kids first and able to make tough decisions in the middle of super difficult situations like the time we nearly went on strike in 2012. We were working with our union and the bad economic times had hit Oregon. We got stuck in bargaining. We had nothing left to give and we were in the middle of cutting jobs and school days. Tensions were high but Ed and then board member, Guy Crawford, took me on a walk around St. Rita's Church and told me how we could settle this bargain. And we did-at 6am the next morning and we did it without a strike.

Ed has been the co-chair of the district's School Improvement Committee for as long as I have been here. He has supported the district's research on what is best educational practice for kids resulting in our wonderful increases in academic assessment scores, increased graduation rates, successful AVID program K-12 (and still the only AVID National Demo Site in Oregon), our equity policy work and making sure that we are always on the cutting edge of best practices in social emotional and visible learning practices.

Ed helped us to pass a \$64 million dollar capital

construction bond in 2010 in the middle of a national financial crisis. Then he helped us design a new \$42 million dollar middle school, construct it and make sure it all came in for the right price. It came in more than one million dollars under budget, allowing Parkrose to do more bond related projects for the community taxpayers.

Ever the champion of kids, Ed has always been my champion. I could always count on Ed to have my back. As the district's CEO for the last decade, I have experienced many uphill battles including huge financial issues year after year, personnel matters, changing boards and community communication mishaps (that have mostly been my fault). Ed never swayed, never doubted, and never stopped believing in me as the superintendent to get the job done for kids and community. You honestly don't know what that feels like when you have the loneliest job in the world.



**Parkrose Board Member  
Ed Grassel**

**Ed Grassel: You cannot know how much a grateful Parkrose Community will miss you and your kindness, generosity, intelligence, love and passion. We wish you all the best and hope sincerely that you come back to board meetings and continue to guide and lead us.**

*Sincerely,  
Dr. Karen Fischer Gray  
Parkrose School District  
Superintendent*

**ONE TEAM ONE DREAM**