



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard

Stanfield Elementary School Principal Lacey Sharp reads a book in the school's "Safe Place" room for kids.

# Oregon FFA receives state funding

By JESSICA POLLARD  
STAFF WRITER

The Oregon FFA, an agricultural education and leadership organization, will receive funding from the state this biennium for the first time in eight years.

House Bill 2444, relating to agricultural education, flew through the Senate on June 30 by a 27-0 vote. The bill appropriates \$1.43 million to the Oregon Department of Education for FFA to provide financing for enrollment, leadership development and the coordination of 24 state-level competitions.

The funding will help make fees for joining the FFA obsolete. The fees have imposed a barrier for students taking agriculture classes who can't afford the \$20 to join the FFA, said JD Cant, co-chair for Advocacy with the Oregon Agriculture Teacher's Association.

There are almost 7,000 students already enrolled in the Oregon FFA. Cant said the funding could help as many as 5,000 additional students, who already take agriculture classes, become enrolled in the intracurricular program.

The bill also appropriates \$600,000 in grant money, to extend contracts for FFA advisors into the summer.

Many advisors already provide engagement in projects and mentoring over summer break. Cant said a lot of one-on-one happens during the summer months. He, along with other agriculture teachers, wouldn't stop working during the summer because they want to continue their programs.

But the educators are doing the work for little to no compensation.

Cant, who teaches in Elgin, has worked around 60 days during the summer, only to receive compensation for 24. He said the minimal pay can make recruitment of agriculture teachers difficult.

"It's hard to pull someone out of industry for teaching when the industry pays better," Cant said. "We don't get into this profession to be rich."

Rep Greg Barreto, R-Cove, who could not be reached for comment, initially introduced the bill in collaboration with the Oregon Agriculture Teachers' Association.

Two similar bills for public funding of the FFA were floated in 2017. The OATA procured a lobbyist to help spearhead the effort, but both failed to pass through Legislature.

"We thought we were on the right track in the 2017 session. I love to think you can get it right the first time, but I don't think that's the process anymore," Cant said.

For years, Wes Crawford, also co-chair of the OATA, said there had been talk of trying to win back some state funding.

"It's been quite a long process," he said.

In the past, the Oregon FFA was funded by the Oregon Department of Education. But as funding declined over a period of two decades, the FFA became reliant on private funding, primarily through the FFA Foundation.

"Now that there's state funding present, it's not going to replace private funding, it's to aid it," Crawford said.

# A different kind of discipline

By JESSICA POLLARD  
STAFF WRITER

The sun is setting on the disciplinary age of no desserts and time-out for children in trouble. It's rising, instead, on a social emotional learning program called Conscious Discipline.

Perhaps Becky Bailey, creator of the program, said it best: "Discipline is not something we do to children, but something we develop within them."

Conscious Discipline has been around for two decades now, and is currently gaining momentum in Eastern Oregon.

The curriculum features books and other classroom aides that educators can purchase online. It is built around the "Seven Skills of Discipline," which are composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, empathy, positive intent, and consequences.

It promotes internal, as opposed to external, reinforcement.

"You don't do it because I'll like you, you do it because it's helpful," said Erin Bartsch, the prenatal to third grade coordinator for Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub.

The program also emphasizes a focus on childhood trauma affecting student success.

"People understand adverse childhood experiences and how they impact learning, and a child's ability to come to school ready to learn," Bartsch said, "When you understand trauma, it changes the way you approach behavior management."

This month, the Conscious Discipline Summer Institute, a seven-day foundational training on the program, will take place in Hermiston July 15-21.

Around 150 educators, administrators and home visitors will be in attendance. Bartsch said the training, which costs \$1,100 to attend, sold out within

a month. The early learning hub, with the help of a Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant, was able to fund 50 of those seats.

With a grant from the Ford Family Foundation, the hub will help provide lunch and travel expenses to attendees. The leftover money will go toward learning materials, which the hub helps supply to teachers in the area.

There will be a one-day Spanish training available as well, and a follow-up training focused on parent education and home visits in August.

Currently, school districts across Umatilla and Morrow counties all incorporate some degree of conscious discipline into the classroom. Umatilla Morrow County Head Start utilizes the program.

The Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center's Native Connections program is instilling CD community-wide.

After the Conscious Discipline Summer Institute, Bartsch said the area can expect more parent education on the matter.

Bartsch said that some districts are more ahead than others, and that it mostly depends on size. She said educators sometimes look to Stanfield School District as an example of implementation.

### Conscious Discipline in action

There is a little room next to Principal Lacey Sharp's office in Stanfield Elementary. It's full of brightly colored seats and picture books. The whiteboard reads in large handwriting, "You have the power to choose!"

This is Stanfield Elementary's "Safe Place." It's where kids go when they are feeling upset and need to calm down, and it plays an integral role in the school's CD program.

Sharp said Stanfield Elementary has been practicing CD for six years now.

The school prefers "call-

ing for help forms" to traditional referrals. Rather than sticking kids in detention, a "connecting session" creates individual time between the student, teacher and principal to discuss the conflict at hand.

"Any type of behavior that students have, they're trying to tell us something and it's our job and opportunity to respond in a helpful way," Sharp said.

But it's not just about the kids. The school has a "Staff Shout Out" board where employees can leave positive comments for each other. Photos of staff friends and family are posted outside the library.

Sharp said when the school first started practicing CD, kids were showing up in Safe Place at a much higher rate than they are now. Every month, students participate in an assembly that covers one of the seven tenets of CD.

Previously, Stanfield Elementary didn't have a school counselor. But start-

ing in the fall, a new counselor will be available two days a week, along with a counseling space adorned with bean bag chairs and games. The counselor will be integral to the continuation of the CD program, Sharp said.

Sharp said that three educators from Stanfield, herself included, will be in attendance at the training later this month.

The middle and secondary schools have adopted some of the CD practices as well.

"It's teaching kids how to manage their emotions, it just looks different from [another] age," Sharp said.

According to the Stanfield School District website, the district has over 520 students. Sharp said administrative support has been integral to implementing CD so deeply.

"For parents," she said, "don't be afraid to learn more about it. [Conscious Discipline] really starts with the adult."

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