



# Driver Education Program News

ODOT - Transportation Safety Division

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## The Driver Education Program Team



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## Driver Education Program Update

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"Willamette Education Service District will pay the state \$75,000 to settle charges that it improperly claimed tuition reimbursements for its driver education program during the 2009-10 school year." This was the lead story in the April 12, 2012 Salem Statesman Journal.

As you can see in our team photo, we have already received a check from WESD minus the DOJ share, which left \$32,000.00. This case was the first ever to be brought under Oregon's "False Claims Act," which allows the state to take action when someone bills the government for services not rendered. It took almost two years from start to finish on this investigation, and this was not an easy effort by any means.

First, the lion's share of the credit goes to Mary DeFerrari who tirelessly followed up leads and gathered documentation, which she used to prepare a comprehensive report. At that point we made the decision to bring the Department of Justice into the picture. There would not have been a case or a recovery, had Mary not done her job with her usual dedication to the driver education community.

Our emphasis is on supporting Oregon driver education providers, not on conducting investigations. But when we suspect that one of the benchmark standards of the program is not being provided, as in this case, we most certainly will follow through. It isn't necessarily easy. Sometimes "hearsay" is all we have to go on, and in those cases it can be a difficult task finding solid proof.

While the rules have undergone changes to keep our program relevant and best practice oriented, rules that are relative to this claim have been around since the transfer of oversight to ODOT in 2000.

The recovered money will be returned to the Student Driver Training Fund, to provide subsidy for other Oregon Teens.

Thanks to the folks at the Department of Justice who also spent many long hours investigating and deposing witnesses on our behalf. In ODOT, Troy Costales was our champion and provided insight and support at every turn.

I do want to say, that although this is a victory for the people of Oregon, I can't wait to get back to the task of ever-improving driver education for every Oregon teen! ❖

## Trainer Of Trainers Success Stories

### Lois Lents

I began my training as a driving instructor in February of 2007. I have worked in the field full-time ever since. For nearly five years, I worked for Oregon Driver Education Center, where I taught both classroom and behind the wheel lessons to students all over the Portland metro area.

In 2010, I embarked on the road to becoming a Trainer of Trainers. Upon completion of the training sessions and several team teaching opportunities, I was thrilled to achieve that goal. I feel extremely honored to be part of the extraordinary group of individuals who make up the ODOT-WOU team.

In addition to my work as a Trainer of Trainers, I am also a new member of the Board of Directors of ODTSEA, and am one of the founding partners of a new DMV-certified and ODOT-approved driving school, Pacific Driver Education. Whether working with candidate instructors or teen drivers, I plan to keep spreading the word that low-risk driving habits are the keys to safety behind the wheel!

### Josh Szurszewski

As a relatively new Trainer of Trainers, Bill Warner asked me to introduce myself to all of you, so: Hi everybody! I'm Josh Szurszewski and I live up in Portland. My background is primarily as a high school English teacher, but when I moved from Alaska to Oregon in 2007 I was looking to take a break for a bit and sort of stumbled into driver education. Like a lot of the candidate instructors I see while teaching classes for Western Oregon University, I didn't really know what to expect on my first day of Foundations of Traffic Safety Education, though I guess I expected teaching driver ed to be relatively easy compared to English and other subjects I'd taught the previous ten years. Ha!

I was really impressed with the dedication and commitment shown by the trainers (mostly Liz Taylor - it's pretty much her fault I'm here at all) teaching my classes and the other classes that were going on at the same time, and decided to try to make traffic safety education a full time job. Now, almost five years later, I can honestly say I'm having a great time teaching both teen program classes for a very small company I recently started with Lois Lents and Steve Lents, and the series of training classes through WOU. If I haven't met you yet, I look forward to doing so at the next conference or maybe when you come to a class for CE hours, and if I have met you, I look forward to seeing you again soon.

## Driver Education Advisory Committee Update

Rich Hanson, DEAC Chairman



We are about to enter our busy season for driver ed and I am sure you are all putting the finishing touches on class enrollments, staffing needs and equipment requirements. It is a time that we look forward to with anticipation and a hope that our enrollments will go up and we can provide driver ed to more kids. The reality is however, that enrollments have trended to about the same each year as students choose to be parent taught, they are dealing with the financial realities of the economy or they delay getting their license until they turn 18. Of course, these are reasonable choices but I think we all believe that driver education is the best solution for teaching and training future drivers and students who have driver ed will easily recoup the cost of the training.

So what is DEAC doing about it? Since the defeat of HB 2140 we realized that the Oregon Legislature is not super supportive of requiring driver education before licensing. The most often cited reason was the cost the families would have to incur if they had to take driver education. The DEAC thought it best to move the discussion from requirement to incentives. A sub-committee was formed at our last meeting and 3 people volunteered to develop a list of ideas on how to incentivize driver education. The members of the committee are Rick Nickell, Loree Nosack, and Andrew Crites. They are meeting on May 8<sup>th</sup> in Salem to discuss ideas and generate a list of incentives they feel might move parents to consider driver education as the best choice for their sons or daughters.

I want all of us to take just a moment and list ideas you think might work to increase the number of students taking driver education and then send those to Rick Nickell at [rick.nickell@hdesd.org](mailto:rick.nickell@hdesd.org) or to Rich Hanson at [contact@dtsconsulting.info](mailto:contact@dtsconsulting.info). Every idea is important and your idea might lead the committee to new ideas or ways to combine what you and someone else have submitted.

As one DE Program Manager used to say every time he talked with me or anyone in the profession, "*Remember, what you do is important.*" Thanks for your continuing commitment to being the very best. ❖

## Several Ways To Get More Involved!

Mary B. DeFerrari, Driver Education Quality Assurance Specialist  
ODOT Transportation Safety Division



Voting members of the Driver Education Advisory Committee, DEAC for short, represent commercial driver training schools, public schools, and community colleges. Annually, positions representing one or more areas come open for consideration. Applications are accepted throughout the year and are held for review upon the next vacancy.

Do you have what it takes? Through their advisory role, DEAC members influence the direction of Oregon's program. Membership requires a strong interest in driver education and a commitment to work as a team. It requires participation in quarterly meetings (two are available by video conference and the remaining two are scheduled in conjunction with the two annual DE conferences) and discretion, as committee work may be confidential. See the ODOT-TSD website for Committee Guidelines, a list of duties and the application form. <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/de.shtml>.

Not interested in membership, but you want to share some great ideas? Contact any of the current members with your thoughts, since members serve as your voice on the committee. The list of members, along with contact information, is also on the TSD site.

In addition to voting members, liaisons who represent specific interests regularly report-out during DEAC meetings. For example, there is a liaison from Western Oregon University and from Driver and Motor Vehicles Division. There are several open liaison positions. If you are interested, or you know someone else who is interested and may be qualified to represent an open liaison area, such as law enforcement, DSAO, PTA, the School Board Association, or any of the other groups listed in the Committee Guidelines, please contact TSD with a letter of interest.

DEAC meetings are open to the public. Anyone may attend the quarterly meetings as an observer. Notify Shari Davis if you would like an agenda at [Shari.C.Davis@odot.state.or.us](mailto:Shari.C.Davis@odot.state.or.us). ❖

## SDES Entry Accuracy Matters

Shari C. Davis, Driver Education Administrative Specialist  
ODOT Transportation Safety Division

We have now been issuing the new driver education student completion certificates for almost five months and the process has gone fairly smooth for everyone involved. However, there is one area in which we could use a little more help.

The student completion certificate printing process is set up to pull data directly from SDES. That means whatever you have entered into SDES is what will be printed on the certificates. If you enter your student names in all-caps, the completion certificates will print in all-caps. The same rule applies to the spelling of the student names and the order in which they are entered. SDES can cross-reference with the DMV record for birth date and permit number accuracy. Unfortunately, the system does not have spell check and if student names are misspelled in the system, they remain misspelled until someone can go in and correct it.

What that means to us is an unacceptable number of completion cards being printed with misspelled student names or the first and last names reversed. The reprinting process is complex and takes quite a bit of time to expedite. What that can mean to the student is a delay in being able to go take their drive test at DMV. In the worst case scenario, it can even affect our long term data record because if a student decides **not** to wait for a completion certificate, they will go to DMV, claim 100 hours of practice time and get their license instead of claiming completion of a driver education course. Therefore, SDES entry accuracy matters.

Please help avoid these problems by double-checking your student entries before you click the submit button in SDES. Just a little effort at the beginning of the process will save a lot of time and trouble down the line. ❖

## On-Line Continuing Education Courses Through Chemeketa Community College

**Chemeketa Community College** is offering online courses that will count toward continuing education hours for the ODOT instructor requirements. The upcoming class schedule is listed below. For more information and course descriptions go to the [Chemeketa webpage](#) or click the Course Descriptions link on the [Driver Education Program webpage](#) under the Continuing Education header.

May 7 – 21, 2012	8 credits	Transitioning From Classroom to Car
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**Course Description:** Designed to facilitate driver education instructor improvement in the area of connecting classroom learning to behind-the-wheel performance. Facilitator and students (instructors) will learn, share, and develop new techniques and skills to be used in driver education classroom.

June 18 – 27, 2012	4 credits	Understanding Risk
July 16 – 30, 2012	8 credits	Study of Crashes
August 6 – 15, 2012	4 credits	Using Brain-based Strategies
August 13 – 27, 2012	8 credits	Zone Control

To register by phone call Chemeketa directly at: 503 584-7541 or visit the website at [www.drivereducation.chemeketa.edu](http://www.drivereducation.chemeketa.edu) (then click on Continuing Education)

