

Women IN BUSINESS



**SUSAN
PENROD**

Seaside School District

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR LINE OF WORK AND WHAT GOT *you* STARTED?

"This is my 26th year in education. I started as a teacher, but I originally did not think I would go into education. I started at Willamette University in Psychology and Philosophy. I had an internship at Oregon State Hospital and my second internship was in the counseling center at an elementary school. That was my first experience in a public school, and I fell in love with education. So, after I finished my bachelor's, I went and got my teaching certificate, and it took off from there."

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL *your* YOUNGER SELF?

"To my kid younger self, I would say be nice to your teachers. In my job I see how hard they are working, so it's a different perspective from when I was a kid. My younger adult self, I would say be really open to possibilities because sometimes as women we're so driven and we feel like we have to know what our future looks like, especially for planners. I tell my daughter all the time:

“ you're a 40-year-old in a 24-year-old's body and you think you have to always tell yourself to have a plan. ”

So I think just being really open-minded, being a constant learner, and being open to where your path takes you. Because when you have an open mind and when you're constantly learning, life's an adventure and it can take you to really exciting places."

WHAT PIECE OF PROFESSIONAL ADVICE HAS HELPED YOU IN *your* CAREER?

"When I was a teacher in Sherwood, I was teaching 5th grade and my Superintendent would spend time in my classroom and he came to me and said, 'I think you should think about administration.' I said, 'but I still love teaching.' And he told me:

“ Just because you love what you're doing, doesn't mean you're not ready for the next phase. ”

That has always stuck with me because even though I loved teaching didn't mean that I wasn't ready to go into administration. Just because I still loved being a Building Principal didn't mean I wasn't ready to be a Curriculum Director. Even though I loved being a Curriculum Director didn't mean I wasn't ready to be a Superintendent. So that has stuck with me."

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE FUTURE women LEADERS?

"Develop a good network of other female leaders to connect with so you can have a mentor, and mentor others as well. Of all the superintendents in the US, only slightly more than 25% are women. In my job, there are a lot of meetings when I am the only woman in the room. It's important to embrace that experience as an opportunity for change instead of a barrier. **Sheila Roley** was an incredible mentor for me, and I can't thank her enough."

WHO IN SEASIDE THAT IS A WOMAN IN BUSINESS INSPIRES *you?*

"We have some incredible women leaders on our school board who inspire me. **Michelle Hawken, Shannon Swedenborg, Sondra Gomez,** and former board member **Lori Lum** are all hard-working women who balance work, family and volunteering with grace.

Their business experiences and perspectives are a wonderful asset. When I first started with the district, they made me feel so welcome and introduced me to members in the community. They never lose focus of what's best for kids."