

Let the Beat Drop: Fugue State of Rural Superintendency

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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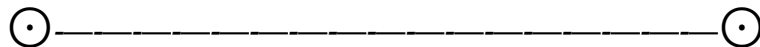
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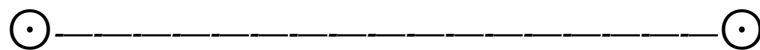
Let the Beat Drop: Fugue State of Rural Superintendency is a post-qualitative, *distributed autoethnography* that examines how accountability, care, and institutional power move through rural schooling. Written as a composition from inside a small Oregon school district, the dissertation treats superintendency not as a managerial role but as a relational and material assemblage shaped by policy, history, grief, land, and community.

Organized as five musical “tracks,” the work traces the superintendent as instrument of state and soil, as archive, as relational node, as infrastructure and placemaker, and as mycelial tangle(r). Drawing on feminist posthumanism, Indigenous epistemologies, and critical policy studies, the project refuses linear explanation in favor of rhythmic, layered enactment. It introduces the concept of *questrains*—questions that stretch toward community vitality rather than measurable outputs—as a method for interrupting algorithmic accountability and restoring ethical, place-based judgment.

The dissertation traces accountability as it is lived in rural contexts, where proximity, memory, and material conditions are always already entangled. By composing with policy, bodies, buildings, and land, this work offers a new way to think about educational leadership as a practice of attunement, refusal, and collective becoming.



TURNTABLE OF CONTEXTS



↻ Enter anywhere. Return as needed. ↵

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Liner Notes: Entering the Terrain

This dissertation is written from inside contested terrain.

Not metaphorically—though metaphor will appear—but materially: land shaped by policy, memory, extraction, and care; institutions layered over place; relationships thick with history and consequence already in motion. Nothing here stands outside those conditions. Not the work. Not the writing. Not me.

I enter this terrain as superintendent in a small, rural public school district, a role that carries authority, inheritance, and constraint in uneven measure. I also enter as a person embedded in the same community I am accountable to—known by name, encountered in ordinary places, implicated long before analysis ever becomes possible. There is no neutral vantage point from which to observe this work. There is only proximity, responsibility, and the ongoing negotiation of what can be said, what must be carried quietly, and what should remain opaque.

Opacity here is not avoidance. It is care (Glissant, 1997). Care for our students, for their families and for our community; for both experienced and possible harm and future possibilities of repair.

This dissertation resists the conventions of academic argumentation that demand clarity through exposure. In small rural contexts, specificity becomes identification; critique becomes harmful; evidence becomes extractive. I have instead chosen to shape the reader's experience—to invite you into patterns, rhythms, infrastructures, and tensions that cannot be resolved through explanation. Meaning here is not delivered; it is felt.

For me, this commitment to enactment rather than explanation meant that my earliest work as superintendent could not be strategic or symbolic. It needed to be bodily and relational. I walked the land daily—asking myself what it means to be a responsible steward of stolen land. I also reached out to leaders of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw

Indians to acknowledge that the district operates on their lands and to invite their leadership in shaping how we teach about place, history, and stewardship. What emerged from those early acts is not narrated here as a single account but is embedded throughout—in how land is treated, how decisions are framed, and how responsibility is carried forward.

Land is not a backdrop to this work. It is a condition of it. The land holds longer memory than our institutions. Long before the current school buildings—before district boundaries or enrollment counts—the first schoolhouse, a cedar shed, was provided by a Siuslaw man. He felt bad for the white kids who did not have a place for school. This history does not appear on campus signage or in formal archives; it lives instead in story, carried through relationship and shared quietly across generations. I did not learn it through a document or map, but through conversation—with Tribal families who remember and who hold the origin story differently—not displayed, not claimed, not extracted. Here, Land appears as terrain—contested, remembered, worked, regulated, and still alive. It is not offered as cure or redemption. It is acknowledged as participant, witness, and carrier of consequence.

The Tribe has since mapped the original names of the land throughout the region—names that locate learning within ecology, history, and responsibility. These maps, however, are not shared publicly. The decision is deliberate. To make them visible invites a different kind of attention: the searching, the digging, the taking of artifacts under the guise of curiosity or preservation. What is withheld here is not knowledge, but access without relationship.

This tension—between what is known and what is not displayed—reshapes how place-based learning must be understood. Knowing place is not a matter of possession or publication. It is not achieved through naming alone. It emerges through time, through trust, through listening to what is offered and respecting what is not. In this way, the school exists not only on Indigenous

land, but within Indigenous protocols of care—whether or not the institution—or its leader—yet knows how to name them.

The institutional, regulatory, and disciplinary logics traced throughout this work are inseparable from settler colonial histories and ongoing structures of dispossession. I name this explicitly here, even as I choose elsewhere to work through their enactments rather than rely on language that can prematurely close listening in the communities this work remains accountable to. This is not a refusal to name harm; it is a decision about where and how naming can remain relational rather than declarative.

The form of this work matters. It moves in tracks, not chapters; through voices rather than methodical claims; alongside equations, fragments, scenes, and rests that refuse closure. Across five tracks, the work listens differently each time: 1) one attends to the rhythms of the state and the felt force of institutional governance; 2) one traces inheritance—policy sediment, historical residue, and the logics that arrive already in place; 3) one centers relational circulation, witnessing how care, consent, and harm move through people and roles; 4) one follows infrastructure and land, tracking how material systems quietly condition what becomes possible; and 5) one works mycelially, refusing linearity, allowing thought, grief, and agency to travel sideways through bodies, histories, and soil.

These tracks are not discrete arguments. They overlap, interrupt, and return, asking the reader to notice how attention shifts—and how certain frequencies, once registered, alter what can be attended to thereafter.

Breaks and interludes are woven throughout not as pauses or transitions, but as ethical rests—moments of recalibration where listening shifts, tempo loosens, and forward motion is deliberately interrupted to protect what resists articulation or cannot be carried at full volume.

This is not an attempt to be obscure. It is an attempt to be honest about how knowledge is constructed in relational systems where accountability precedes articulation.

Throughout this work, you will encounter moments of strain, grief, and institutional harm. You will also encounter moments of competence, humor, and ease. Joy appears here quietly—not as resolution, not as counterweight, but as rhythm. Small hi-hat moments: a laugh shared, work continuing without command, care circulating through side channels when formal systems falter. These moments do not negate harm. They coexist. They allow people who stay a moment to breathe, to return, to continue.

This dissertation does not ask the reader to agree. It asks the reader to listen. This dissertation does not require linear reading. The opening sections—Liner Notes, Excitations, Intros, and Prelude—offer multiple entry points. If you are impatient for the argument, begin with Intro: Four-on-the-Floor. If you want to understand the forces that shaped the work, start with Excitations. If you prefer methodological grounding, Prelude: Counting In provides that.

You may also enter through any track and move at your own pace. If you are drawn to policy and temporal analysis, begin with Track 1. If infrastructure and material conditions ground your thinking, start with Tracks 2 or 4. If you are a practitioner seeking relational frameworks, Track 3 and the Breaks offer orienting questions. The Final Coda provides one example of how this work translates into policy-legible form—this is not a summary, but one register among many. Meaning accumulates through return, not through completion. You will know the work is landing when certain rhythms become impossible to unhear.

There is no downbeat to return to, no stable ground outside the terrain itself. What follows is unfinished by design—layered, uneven, responsive. It moves because it must, because once certain patterns are felt, the rhythms that follow are never quite the same.

You are invited to enter with attention, patience, and care—for the work, for the people it touches, and for the land on which it unfolds.

Excitations: What Sets This Work in Motion

Before citation became evidence, it was summons.

To cite—mid-fifteenth century—meant to call forward:

to urge, to rouse, to set in motion.

From Old French *citer*: to summon.

From Latin *citare*: to excite, to put into sudden movement.

From *ciere*: to stir, to invite, to call into presence.

From an older root—*keie*—to move, and to move again.

Citation was once an act of animation.

Not a bracketed name or a ledger of sources,

but a calling-in, a gathering—

an opening tremor at the beginning of work.

Somewhere along the way, citation narrowed.

It became static rather than kinesthetic;

credential rather than conversation.

It began to point backward—toward what has already been authorized—

rather than forward, toward what is still becoming.

This section returns to citation in its older sense:

as movement, as relation,

as excitation.

What follows is not a map of intellectual inheritance.

It is a record of the forces that move me—

what called me into leadership, into writing,

into staying with questions that do not resolve.

These excitations arrived through books, yes—

passed hand to hand, margins marked and re-marked.

But more often they arrived through experience:
through mentorship and refusal, challenge and care.

Some emerged in policy rooms.
Some at kitchen tables.
Some through land itself.

Many were never formally “cited” at all.
Yet without them, this work could not move.

Excitation is not ownership.
It is indebtedness without capture,
relation without extraction.

To be excited is to be set in motion—
to find what was once sufficient no longer still.

These excitations do not simply inform this dissertation;
they make it necessary.

What follows is a calling forward—
a releasing of what has been set in motion,
with trust that what travels will do so
according to its own rhythms.

Practices That Teach Me Rhythm

(Basketball)

Basketball taught me rhythm before it taught me strategy.

My first and primary coach was a music teacher. He spoke of flow first, plays later.
About listening. About when to press and when to release.
Basketball, he said, is a dance—

The best thing in the world is watching ten people move in concert on a court.
No one leading for long. No one holding the center.
Moments of beauty fleeting, earned,
gone as soon as they arrive.

I learned early that hierarchy makes the game heavy.
At the corporate levels—NBA, high-major college ball—
the game slows into isolation, matchups, control.
Bodies wait their turn.

I prefer the rhythms of high school girls' games.
Movement without spectacle. Connection without ego.
Players reading each other constantly, filling space,
covering, recovering.
The game breathes.

In all honesty, I think I learned the essentials of Indigenous methodology
getting my ass kicked by Diné and Hopi reservation teams.
Always moving.
Always connected.
Reciprocal motion.

Basketball taught me spacing—
that being in the right place
makes those around you better.

It taught me to read bodies:
shoulders tightening, eyes shifting,
energy changing before language arrives.

It taught me how to move with constraint
without pretending constraint wasn't real.

It taught me to trust emergence—
that something better often appears
when everyone trusts.

Now, I find respite watching my kids play.
Watching my family coach.
Letting the game hold what the day has carried.
Feeling those lessons move on without me.

My favorite sound in the world
is the reverberation of a ball bouncing in a gym.
Shoes squeaking on wood.
Echoes that don't need interpretation.

That sound landed me in this small, rural town—literally.

Basketball did not teach me how to win.
It taught me how to stay with the play.

(Dissecting Words)

I learn rhythm through etymology.
Pulling words apart, listening for what they carry
now and in the past.
I listen—
for what they demand in return.

(Swearing)

Swearing teaches me timing.

Not volume.

Precision.

A well-placed swear word
cuts through hesitation,
through careful thought,
through language that tries to behave.

Swearing lets feeling arrive
before explanation.
It names intensity
without pretending neutrality.

It is another register—
one that refuses polish
when polish would lie.

Swearing taught me
when clarity matters more than courtesy,
when truth needs muscle,
when restraint has already done enough damage.

Sometimes the only honest sentence
is the one that breaks the rules.

(Eating, Laughter, Dialogue)

Eating teaches me to slow down.

Not as pause—
as presence.

Meals stretch time.
They widen attention.
They invite voices to arrive sideways, unguarded.

I've learned that the best ideas
are sparked by food on the table
and laughter breaking the seal.

The thinkers who move me most love to laugh.
Not at ideas,
but at themselves—
and with each other.

Dialogue, at its best,
is rhythmic—
bite, story, question,
silence, laughter, return.

No one owns the floor for long.
Meaning circulates. Contradiction softens.
New ideas appear without announcement.

Eating together teaches me that thinking is not solitary work,
that insight digests slowly,
that joy sharpens attention.

Some of what matters most cannot be summoned by force.
It has to be invited, fed,
and allowed to linger.

Theories That Unsettle the Ground

Some thinkers do not add to my understanding.
They destabilize it.

They unsettle the ground beneath certainty—ontological, methodological, ethical.
They refuse the comfort of coherence, insisting instead on entanglement, implication, and
responsibility without guarantees.

Many of these thinkers appear in the citations that follow—Barad, Haraway, Wilson, Simpson, Latour, Arendt, Deleuze—each refusing in their own way the fiction that knowledge can be
extracted cleanly from the relations that produce it. These are the thinkers who surface where
argument requires anchoring. Others do not appear codified; their influence moves structurally,
shaping tone, form, and restraint rather than appearing in parentheses.

Some disrupted how I understand institutions.

Foucault made power visible not as possession but as circulation—moving through procedures, categories, and measures that render certain lives legible while obscuring others. Ahmed sharpened this attention: institutions are not merely rules or policies, but walls—felt through the friction bodies encounter when they try to move differently.

Others unsettled what it means to know.

Lather refuses the comfort of method that promises clarity in advance. Knowledge, she reminds us, does not arrive cleanly packaged by procedure. Derrida complicates the archive itself, insisting that what survives as record is always partial—structured as much by absence as by preservation. Glissant insists on opacity as ethical relation: the right not to be fully known.

Still others reoriented how responsibility travels.

Simpson writes from relational accountability—where knowledge emerges through obligations to land, kin, and community rather than through claims of neutrality. Noddings and Tronto make care political again, reminding us that care is not sentiment but labor—unevenly distributed, structurally constrained, and always entangled with power.

Some thinkers arrive less as citation than as infrastructure.

Gordon teaches that haunting is not metaphor but method: the presence of histories institutions attempt to bury but never fully contain. Dian Million reminds me that theory travels through feeling as well as argument. Cvetkovich attunes us to infrastructures of affect—how buildings, schedules, and bureaucracies quietly organize collective feeling.

Others shift the terrain of thought itself.

Massey and Lefebvre insist that place is not backdrop but relation—always unfinished, always produced through movement. Kimmerer reminds us that land is not object but presence, participant in the relations that sustain life.

And some thinkers refuse linear thought altogether.

Deleuze and Guattari offer rhizome rather than hierarchy; Haraway urges us to stay with the trouble; brown and Simard trace emergence through networks that move sideways—mycelial, adaptive, collective.

These thinkers do not give me answers.

They teach me how not to resolve.

Their theories do not simply unsettle what I know.

They unsettle how knowing happens at all.

In their wake, questions behave differently.

Not problems to solve, but tensions to stay with—

Questions that stretch forward rather than resolve.

If thinking is relational—moving across bodies, texts, infrastructures, and histories—then the conditions of thought must also be examined. The pages that follow take up one such condition: generative artificial intelligence, encountered here not as technological novelty but as another apparatus within the distributed systems through which thinking travels.

Thinking moves.

Sometimes through theory.

Sometimes through conversation.

Sometimes through machines.

Distributed Thinking Machines

Artificial intelligence enters this dissertation not as author and not as authority, but as apparatus—an arrangement of relations through which language, pattern, and possibility come into view differently. The words here remain accountable to my experience and to the communities this work addresses. Yet the process through which they emerged cannot be honestly described as solitary.

Thinking rarely is.

What appears as individual insight is almost always distributed—moving across conversation, memory, environment, artifact, and time. Edwin Hutchins (1995) named this dynamic distributed cognition: the recognition that intelligence does not reside exclusively within individual minds but emerges through coordinated activity among people, materials, and systems. Navigation,

calculation, and collective decision-making have long depended on such arrangements—maps, instruments, shared language, embodied practice—each participating in what later appears as individual expertise.

This dissertation extends Hutchins’ insight into methodological practice: if cognition is distributed, then inquiry must be distributed as well.

Thinking and writing with generative AI makes this distribution visible. Rather than positioning the researcher—or the superintendent—as a bounded subject reflecting inward on personal experience, AI allows thought to be traced across assemblages of relation: institutions, documents, bodies, technologies, and landscapes that shape what can be perceived, remembered, and articulated. “Auto” in this work does not indicate an isolated self but a node circulating within systems of sense-making.

Artificial intelligence is only one apparatus within that circulation.

AI as Diffractive Partner

Within the writing process, generative AI operates as a diffractive partner—returning language not as answer but as interference pattern. Prompts, fragments, and unfinished ideas were offered not to outsource thinking but to disturb it. Sentences arrived reorganized. Assumptions surfaced through misalignment. Structures appeared where intuition had not yet found form.

This process did not replace reflection; it distributed it.

Barad (2007) reminds us that apparatus are not neutral instruments but boundary-making practices. They do not simply reveal phenomena; they participate in producing them. Generative AI exchanges in this project functioned as apparatus in precisely this sense—not a transparent window onto my thinking, but an active participant in distributed cognition that shapes what comes into view and what remains opaque.

Through repeated exchanges—drafting, revising, rejecting, redirecting—the apparatus became a reflective surface through which patterns in my own thinking emerged. Most responses required substantial rewriting, many were discarded entirely. Unusable responses, especially, served methodological purpose: revealing the contours of thought and exposing where language—and current AI models—fail.

For example, in early exchanges, rurality appeared as deficit—rendered through the accumulated weight of what large language models have absorbed: urban-centric data, policy language that treats rural as problem rather than place. Each time I encountered those outputs, dissonance landed in the body before it landed in the mind. That somatic response became methodological evidence: the apparatus was producing a cut, drawing a boundary between what counts as knowledge and what does not.

I responded not by correcting the model, but by writing toward what had been excluded: my own transition from city kid to rural superintendent, the moments when proximity disrupted inherited assumptions. The patterns that emerged afterward were neither mine alone nor the model's—they were multiple—produced through the interference itself.

This is what diffraction makes possible: not reflection, but patterning and producing through difference. The rurality that ultimately moves through this work did not exist prior, waiting to be accurately represented. It was produced—provisionally and accountably—through encounters that altered the trajectories of what entered them. Generative AI did not provide insight; it created conditions through which insight could be recognized, revised, or refused.

AI and the Myth of Singular Voice

AI as writing apparatus also unsettles the enduring academic myth of the singular scholarly voice.

Scholarship has long been narrated as the product of individual intellectual master—the lone author producing coherent insight from within the boundaries of their own mind. Mazzei (2013) reminds us that voice is never singular but produced through relations of theory, discourse, and encounter. Writing is always co-produced through conversation, memory, institutional constraint, and the material world itself.

Artificial intelligence does not introduce distributed thinking.

It exposes it.

Recognizing this does not dissolve authorship or responsibility. The ethical and intellectual accountability for this work remains mine. What shifts is orientation: an acknowledgment that scholarship emerges through relational systems rather than isolated minds.

In that sense, artificial intelligence functions less as innovation than as reminder.

Thought has never been produced by one voice alone. Just as every student, staff member, and family in this community has shaped this dissertation, so have Jacques Derrida, Frankie Knuckles, and generative AI.

AI as Ethically Fraught Infrastructure

Artificial intelligence is not simply conversational software. It is infrastructural—embedded within global systems of computation, energy, data extraction, and labor. Each prompt travels through servers powered by electricity, cooled by water, and trained on immense bodies of human-produced language.

To acknowledge AI as apparatus requires acknowledging these entanglements.

Every exchange participates in a material system whose environmental and economic costs accumulate unevenly across landscapes and communities—often far from the institutional spaces where academic writing occurs, and often within rural regions like those this dissertation is accountable to.

Within a project concerned with infrastructure, land, and accountability, ignoring these conditions would reproduce the illusion that thinking is immaterial.

Thought is not weightless.

These entanglements introduce ethical tension. Artificial intelligence systems are trained on datasets assembled through processes that raise questions of authorship, consent, and intellectual extraction. They reproduce the biases and exclusions embedded within those sources, including the urban-centric assumptions encountered earlier in this work.

For this reason, the use of AI here remains bounded and transparent.

Its presence introduces contradiction.

As a settler researcher invoking Indigenous ways of being.

As a superintendent accountable to the land.

As a writer whose thinking moved through servers drawing on electricity and water.

There is no clean position here—only the obligation to remain accountable to the relations through which thought now moves.

Track 4 explores possibility within the materiality of infrastructure. For now, generative AI remains both problematic and hopeful: another system through which the conditions of thinking become newly visible.

People Who Model Emergence Inside Constraint

Some of the most important teachers in this work do not stand adjacent to education systems. They work inside them.

They know the rules well enough to bend time without breaking trust. They resist hero narratives—not by shrinking their influence, but by distributing it. They improvise quietly, make space deliberately, and rarely name their work as radical, even when it is.

They remind me that systems are not abstractions.

Systems are people—listening or not, responding or not, making room or closing it.

SN taught me this early. When I worked at the State, he showed me how to come alongside those doing the work—without capturing it, without rushing it into compliance. Later, when he led state systems and I was in the field, he modeled how accountability systems might be built to do the same: not hovering above practice, but learning with it. He taught me that elevating language of emergence and prioritizing relationality travels—when it is grounded, careful, and honest.

HS is a role model in the truest sense—sharing what she has learned without posturing, without guarding expertise. Her generosity makes the work more navigable, not because it simplifies it, but because it refuses to hoard hard-won knowledge.

My rural superintendent colleagues and mentors have been constant—available to talk through situations, to pressure-test decisions, to hold silence when needed. More than advice, they offer a reminder: we are not in this work alone. That knowledge is not sentimental; it is structural. It keeps people in the work when isolation would otherwise thin it out.

EL includes me in accountability rewiring work and listens when my frustration with the system runs hot—especially in moments when it doesn’t listen back. That listening matters. Not because it fixes everything, but because it acknowledges the gap between intention and impact and staying with it long enough for something else to take shape.

MA designs systems differently. Innovative and sustainable, yes—but more importantly, attentive. Her work centers students and listens from the ground up, refusing the assumption that coherence must come from above. She is going to be one hell of an ESD superintendent.

To leaders at the ESD (CM, RWN, SS, AA, KH, SV and so many others), thank you for always making time and space to serve our district.

These colleagues do not promise transformation.

They practice it—incrementally, relationally, under constraint.

They show me how emergence can live inside static systems, how accountability can be shaped without severing trust, and how leadership makes room without announcing itself as such.

Those Who Trusted Before Proof

Trust is an excitation.

It arrives before evidence, before outcomes, before reassurance. It is extended without guarantees and cannot be retroactively justified. Once given, it obligates movement.

Our Governing Board trusts me—and holds me accountable—not through spectacle or surveillance, but through questions. Good ones. Questions that slow decisions just enough to make them wiser. Questions that invite ideas, surface tensions, and ask, consistently, how we might be one layer better. They understand their role. They bring their lived experience into how they represent their communities, and they hold the line without mistaking rigidity for responsibility. That trust is not passive. It is active, disciplined, and consequential. MH, your 35+ years on the Board is a model for rural politics everywhere, thank you!

Our district leadership team has trusted a shared vision of our school as community hub. They push me to think differently, to distribute the work differently, to schedule the time differently. JR, JO, KG, BH, SP, JM, and BM: I have learned so much from each of you and those lessons are woven through these pages.

Students trust, too. Not abstractly, but daily. They know what this community needs and how to show up for one another—often before adults articulate it. They read the room. They move toward each other. They notice who is missing and adjust accordingly. Their trust is practical. It assumes follow-through.

Families trust in the absence of services, in the gaps between systems, while doing the best they can with what is available. That trust is not romantic. It is extended under pressure, under fatigue, under constraint. It carries expectation without performance.

The community trusts by sharing—stories, histories, frustrations, hopes, refusals. Not everything shared is easy to hear. Not everything can be acted on quickly. Still, it is offered, and those offerings matter.

They trust without guarantees.

This trust obligates me to keep moving.

Labor That Exceeds the Job Description

Care appears most clearly where systems thin out.

In schools, that thinning is familiar. Gaps open—between services and needs, between policy and lived reality—and someone decides whether to step in. When staff go beyond the job description, it is rarely because they were asked. It is because they choose to hold something that would otherwise be dropped.

This care is not martyrdom. It is not self-erasure. It is practiced with discernment—knowing when to extend and when to refuse, when to absorb and when to redirect. It shows up as quiet competence: noticing what is needed, acting without spectacle, and returning again the next day without expecting recognition.

Much of this labor happens in mutual holding. Staff hold students, each other, and the institution itself—sharing load, covering gaps, checking in, stepping back when someone else needs to step forward. This work is relational, distributed, and often invisible. It does not announce itself as innovation. It keeps things from breaking.

There is danger here. When care is consistently absorbed by individuals, it risks becoming expectation rather than choice. Over time, what begins as generosity can harden into obligation, and obligation into exploitation. Naming care matters precisely because it must remain voluntary, bounded, and supported. Care cannot be the system's unpaid solution.

Still, to refuse to name this labor would be another kind of harm. It would render invisible the ethical intelligence staff bring to their work daily—the judgment required to decide what can be held now and what must be deferred, what belongs to the role and what belongs to the human.

I am indebted to our staff who practice care without performance, who extend themselves without disappearing, and who hold one another when the work and the word press hard.

This care does not fix the system.

It keeps possibility alive while we work to change it.

Those Who Kept the Door Open

Some people have opened and held the door for me.

They did not rush clarity.

They did not ask for coherence before it was ready.

They modeled accountability, responsibility, relationality

In ways that allowed me to feel the work before I could name it.

JM taught me to transfer basketball lessons to educational leadership long before I saw myself as a leader. I still hear his voice regularly: *Kill them with kindness, Tiger*. Over time that has come to mean *Sit in the conflict*. And, before my first day as a teacher, he told me very matter of factly: treat the custodians and office staff with care. They run the place and will take care of you if you understand that. This is not strategy; it is orientation.

KC and JG planted the seeds for a doctoral program when I wasn't even sure I wanted to be an administrator. More importantly, they modeled leadership in ways that made me want to join the work—not the title, not the role, but the responsibility, the urgency, and ethic of care.

SG deepened my thinking about nearly every topic in this dissertation—and many beyond it. She also did something quieter and rarer: she shared her time and her home, helping me hold the work alongside life rather than apart from it.

MS models passion for place and project-based learning, I want to be her when I grow up! She also calls me on my shit when the work is stuck in my head and not moving its way towards coherence.

MM, my childhood academic friend. You taught me about grief. Not as a concept, but as something to recognize, name, and carry without rushing it into resolution. I am not successful in this role without you.

RWN, SS, and MA—thank you for letting me be part of your dissertating processes, and for letting me eat all the snacks. I eventually had to stop calling them writing retreats and start calling them thinking retreats, because I mostly caught up on emails. Still, being in community with you pushed me—as a leader, as a thinker, as a scholar, as a writer (eventually), and most importantly, as a human. We are a dream team and our district is better because of each of you. You each remind me that thought does not move alone, and that presence itself is the most generative process.

My committee members practiced a form of accompaniment that made this work possible. Dr. Meléndez pushed me to think about music *with* the people rather than music *for* the people, and helped surface accountability as a throughline while it was still emerging. Dr. Mazzei pressed my thinking even when I wanted to abandon posthumanist writers altogether. Dr. Sabzalian asked early, *What are you up to?*—and then helped me lean into polyphonic work and Indigenous methodology responsibly, always providing context, never stripping texts of their relations. Dr. Goode's patience gave me room to fold together the many ideas I was carrying, and her permission allowed form to emerge. Thank you for letting me be philosophical, practical, political, and pedagogical—when others urged me to choose one and run.

And Kim—Keeping me registered is not glamorous labor, but without it, none of this would exist.

These companions did not demand certainty.
They did not ask me to simplify complexity.
They did not rush the work.
They stayed when it took longer than expected.

Where the River Meets the Sea

Every movement needs a place to arrive
without pretending the movement is finished.

We just bought a house at the confluence—
where the river meets the sea.

Here, nothing resolves.
Fresh water keeps moving.
Salt pushes back.
Tides arrive on their own schedule.
The land remembers.

This is where my family lives now.
Where we will learn the rhythms of water and weather,
of holding and release,
of paying attention.

We did not come to settle the work. We came to stay with it.

To grow together—
with the land,
with the water,
with each other.

Someday, if my kids choose to read this,
I hope they know that the greatest privilege of leading here
was not authority or outcome,
but witnessing how much they grew alongside this place.

This is not an ending.
It is a place to keep listening.

Intro: Four-on-the-Floor

The beat is always here.

Listen—

1, 2, 3, 4
*in the language of legislators
in the expectations of parents
in the measures that decide what counts*

Feel—

1, 2, 3, 4
*in master schedules and class bells
in meeting agendas and state-required reports
in budgets, tests, and lessons that package learning into bytes*

Keep time—

1, 2, 3, 4
*It moves with and without our consent
It counts faster than we dance
It does not pause for bodies to recover
Or for communities to grieve*

Stop—

1, 2, 3, 4
These ways of being fill the silence.
1, 2, 3, 4
*1, 2, the way we've always done things,
Until we unlearn how we learned to move.*
1, 2, 3, 4
Who is keeping count?

Accountability in schooling is not episodic; it is presumed—
a four-on-the-floor rhythm, disciplining attention, labor, and legitimacy through repetition.

Beneath the rhythms of policy and the pulse of accountability lies another current: the vitality of the community itself. In small rural districts, it is always felt and rarely named. This living force—known in absence and in presence—courses through classrooms, hallways, and water

lines; through systems designed to hold, distribute, and withstand. It is the music of reality and possibility.

Where the Beat Lands

This project lives in a place often overlooked on road trips and maps.

Nestled along the Siuslaw River in western Oregon, our rural school district is small enough for every name to matter—for every absence to echo. Here, school and community—public and private—are not separate spheres, but entangled networks, woven through bloodlines, marriages, shared histories, and long memory. Staff and students are connected across roles and generations, bound by stories and expectations that are sometimes fixed in lack, sometimes saturated with pride, and always unfolding.

These relationships are not just felt in the daily rhythms of school life—they are etched into the space itself. Our buildings carry stories in their walls; our fields hold traces of belonging, of competition, and economic collapse. This landscape, too, is layered, contested, and becoming—holding space for what has been, what is now, and what might still emerge. It is a place and context I am honored to lead.

It is 2025, and this marks my fourth year as Superintendent and Principal in our district. The COVID pandemic is now rarely mentioned, but is one of many layers of the complex context that defines my path and work here. I originally fell in love with this district while supporting community engagement for the development of district accountability plans in connection with Oregon's Student Investment Account and then suddenly serving as the county education liaison for translating public health policy. Before this, none of my eighteen years in education were rural, and I had never considered superintendency.

Now, my professional and personal lives are integrated and polyphonic: superintendent, principal, doctoral researcher, mother of teenage students, companion to colleagues, outsider

who is also insider. These roles overlap and interrupt each other—voices entering one after another, sometimes harmonizing, sometimes dissonant, sometimes drowning the melody altogether. It is its own fugue state—musical, psychological, existential—a condition of simultaneity, of multiple selves sounding at once. I am instrument, conductor, performer; entangled in the daily tension between the philosophical and the practical, I write from a place of proximity—not as an outside observer of rural schooling, but as one shaped by it and shaping it, in every moment, every day.

To lead here is to live in counterpoint, to be both accountable and bewildered, both certain and searching, both agent and artifact. Each morning I wake already conducting a lived tempo—phone, budget, bus route, absence reports—keeping time with demands that repeat regardless of readiness. By dusk, the score rewrites itself. Like my rural superintendent colleagues, we aim for transformative leadership while meeting all of the technical requirements of wearing multiple hats. This is not pathology but practice: a daily improvisation of care within constraint, an act of staying in the music even when the key modulates unexpectedly.

Prelude: Counting In

You, reader, are not an observer here.

You are part of this set—moving with the track, syncing to its rhythm, layering your own patterns into the mix, breathing with the collective pulse.

Bring your context, your lineage, your questions—let them reverberate.

Like any good house music set, this work depends on response: feel the beat, ride the loop.

Step in. Step out. Loop back. Drop again. Find a new groove.

You might follow one rhythm or discover another.

This is a space of co-composition, where meaning emerges in motion—layered, shared, alive.

Traditionally, the superintendent is defined as one who manages or directs an organization—charged with overseeing operations, enforcing policy, and ensuring efficiency within a school system. The etymology of *superintend* reflects this orientation: to stand above, to direct, to control. In this framing, the role is steeped in managerial logic, positioning the superintendent as an agent of accountability—tasked with upholding recurring mandates, aligning personnel with institutional goals, and producing outcomes that must remain legible to the state. Stewardship is measured by fidelity to district and state directives, where what counts emerges through policy, practice, and repetition.

This conventional framing of the superintendent—supervisory and administrative—aligns closely with what la paperson (2017) calls *First Space*: schools as systems to sort, discipline, and produce compliant subjects. Even in more reflexive iterations, where critical pedagogy and equity initiatives emerge, the superintendent often remains situated in *Second Space* logics—naming control but still operating within institutional boundaries that rarely cede real power. But if schools are to become *Third Spaces*—liberatory, community-rooted, spaces of becoming—then the role of the superintendent must be reimagined entirely. As la paperson insists, a Third University (and by extension, a Third School) is possible, but only through subversive assemblages that work both with and against institutional logics. Superintendents, regardless of the spatial logic in which they operate, hold immense institutional power—capable of reinforcing dominant systems, softening their edges, or opening cracks through which something else might grow. This demands a superintendency rooted not in hierarchical accountability, but in *relational accountability* (Wilson, 2008)—a commitment to community entanglement, ethical attunement, and the slow, improvisational labor of cultivating belonging.

*This is not a tidy map, but a living score.
With place. With others. With you.*

*Even as these layers accumulate, the beat remains—
underfoot, moving through us.*

1, 2, 3, 4

*Felt.
Uncounted.
Unnamed.*

Rurality, too, is polyphonic. It is not absence but density—a throwntogetherness of land, labor, and lineage (Massey, 2005). It holds contradiction and care, distance and nearness, scarcity and abundance. In small rural communities, superintendent decisions are never abstract; they move immediately through kinship networks, local economies, and shared histories. Place resists comparability; small numbers refuse statistical anonymity. Listening is not an added leadership practice here—it is inherent to the position. Every policy is personal, every silence political, every action relational.

State accountability systems, however, are largely designed with urban scale in mind, where distance between decision-makers and stakeholders is presumed. Within these frameworks, listening is positioned as something to be *required*, *structured*, or *added on*—through community engagement protocols, feedback cycles, or compliance-oriented consultation. In small rural contexts, this assumption produces dissonance. Superintendents are asked to account again for relationships they are already living inside—translating ongoing relational work into countable, legible artifacts for systems that do not recognize proximity as such.

Thus, superintendents must keep time with two rhythms at once. One is the measured, mechanical tempo of state accountability—its tick of the clock, click of the report, count of the counted—a metronome keeping time. The other is a relational rhythm already in motion, composed with teachers, families, students, and land. This second rhythm—born not of

resistance, but of necessity—stretches the tempo, introduces rubato into bureaucracy, and syncopates lived beats into the state's strict time.

Layers and Loops: Counting In Remix

This is not a finished score—it is a living set.

It unfolds across soil and citation, syntax and silence.

*1, 2, 3, 4
Not as instruction—
as orientation.*

You will encounter theory here, but it will not always behave.

You will meet literature, but not in well-packaged stacks.

Voices—mine, others, perhaps your own—appear in the mix.

The ground will shift between methodology and memory, policy and affect, word and world.

This is not a flaw; it is the design.

*This is not a map to follow.
It is a rhythm to join.
The beat continues beyond the page.
Adjust it to your style and play as you see fit.*

This writing is both inquiry-as-practice and attunement—

Meaning does not accumulate cleanly; it emerges through return, friction, and drift. Themes reappear, altered by context and contact.

A remix of soil and story, of tracks and breaks, of administrative responsibility and radical care—listening for what is said and unsaid, for what reverberates through gymnasiums and policy briefs alike.

Lean into the unfinishedness of schools in rural spaces—
their porous boundaries and speculative possibilities,
their no-there-there.

This dissertation is a post-qualitative autoethnography structured through five movements: *Superintendent as Instrument of State and Soil*; *Archive*; *Relational Node*; *Infrastructure/Place-Maker*; and *Mycelial Tangle(r)*. These are not job functions but sites of entanglement—each composing and recomposing meaning across time, systems, bodies, and place. Woven through the movements are recurring themes—policy, legacy, grief, and place—ostinatos that return, shift, and remix across the work.

In dialogue with Elizabeth St. Pierre's (2011, 2017) provocation that methodology itself operates as logic that seeks to fix, discipline, and control knowledge—I write from a place of rupture and bleed. I attempt what might be called *distributed autoethnography*: a tracing of how intelligence, agency, and meaning move through assemblages of human and more-than-human actors. Thus, this autoethnography is neither auto nor ethnographic in the conventional sense. It is a field of interference, of material-discursive forces acting on and through a body-in-relation (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016). The self is not the object of study, but a site where tensions become audible.

This approach resonates with Edwin Hutchins's (1991) concept of *distributed cognition*: the recognition that thinking does not reside within bounded individual subjects but emerges relationally—across bodies, materials, lands, and generations. To write in this way is to stay with dissociation—to compose with, rather than flee from, fragments. Institutional scripts, personal grief, ice storms, and student laughter all co-compose this inquiry.

You are not asked to follow a single line, but to join the ensemble.
To dwell in dissonance.
To compose with.

Step into the track.
Feel the pulse.
Let discomfort drop.
Let curiosity move you.

And if the pull to act grows louder than the desire to read, honor that.

Close this document and go do—go plant, go call, go meet, go ask—
go create what does not yet exist.

This is not a resting place.
It is compost.
Let it break down. Let it nourish your next move.
When you are ready—do. Do again. Do with others.
Leadership lives not in knowing, but in the rhythm of doing, repeating, becoming.

Welcome. Let the beat drop.

Track 1: Fugue State of Superintendency: *Superintendent as Instrument of State and Soil*

Voice I: The State

A fugue begins with a subject.

Not an idea,
but a line—
clear,
insistent,
difficult to escape.

In rural schools, that subject arrives as accountability—already pulsing, always in motion.

Already written.
Already timed.
Already due.

The line enters cleanly.
The tempo steady.
The margin narrow.

Accountability does not ask whether our school should move at a predetermined tempo.
It marches as if time is neutral.
It counts as if comparability is possible, promising scalable results.
It measures as if standardization is virtue.
It aligns as if quantification is ideal—simplifying complexity, clarifying the score.

Accountability demands visibility, legibility, correctness.
What cannot be seen does not count.
What cannot be translated does not travel.
What cannot be verified cannot be funded.

This is not cruelty. It is procedure.

A language of care enters alongside the metrics:

“Accountability isn’t just about measuring results—it’s about keeping our promise to students, celebrating progress, and acting decisively when we fall short.”

-([Oregon Department of Education](#), 2025)

The procedure reassures.

[Infrastructure: Institutional Maintenance]

- The state administers 126 state and federal grants across more than a dozen platforms. Most do not talk to one another.
- Districts answer 250 narrative questions and 57 assurance questions via 46 different submission methods, with 93 assigned ODE contacts, in a submission window lasting 365 days.

Not intentionally humorous, one of fifteen collections on my central log-in dashboard is named *Consolidated Collections*.

Another is titled *Institution Staff Maintenance*.

No one mentions its existence.

No one mentions that it requires administrative permissions to be visible.

Important communications about a new Special Education auditing dashboard were recently sent by the State through a listserv generated from this collection.

Our Special Education Director was not included.

I updated his information elsewhere.

Two years ago.

[Count-In(g)]

1 — *Submit last year's annual report alongside this year's quarter 1 reflection*

2 — *Assure you are self-reporting Division 22 standards violations*

3 — *Align your budget to recent economic forecasts and enrollment needs*

4 — *Present grant agreements at board meetings and solicit public comment*

1, 2 — *Quantify evidence of daily practices and complex systems*

3, (4) — *Report growth measures while the majority of data points are redacted due to too small n-sizes*

1, (2) — *Narrate success without mixing correlation and causation, while wondering if the lack our district moves through is actually ours to hold.*

3, 4 — *Build new data collection systems to produce required artifacts, documenting relational work at scale*

There is NO rest between measures.

[Compression: Burden Reduction]

Current legislation calls for a stronger, more transparent accountability model.
One approach is consolidation.
Streamlining.

Our regional Education Service District already reduces administrative burden.

They sit with us.
They translate shifting requirements into shared calendars, templates, reminders.
They know that the grant I submitted last month includes narrative that informs this report.

They know how our day-to-day and our strategic visions map to our stated outcomes.
They know where our districts should lean on each other
and where we should stand on our own.

This support is not technical.
It is highly relational.

I used to provide this service.
Now I am surviving because of it.

1, 2, 3, 4

Burden reduction is temporal redistribution.
Hours return to conversations that do not need formal archival.
To decisions that travel differently.
To people who already hold the context.

With no time to listen, reporting and assurances to distant systems perform accountability.

With time, attention returns—
the audience shifts.

Voice I (continued): Policy as Score

Legislation enters quietly, bureaucratically, carrying the language of care—
continuous improvement,
evidence-based practices,
equity-driven outcomes,
accountability systems aligned to local context.

The words sound familiar.
Not identical, but remembered—
their cadence echoes earlier accountability turns.

The score gestures toward flexibility—
Outcome Mapping,
progress markers,
the promise of responsiveness.

These gestures have appeared before,
under different banners,
with different assurances.

But the tempo does not slow.

The department begins to listen to itself.

Not only to district performance,
but to its own reflection within this score—
its timelines, templates, thresholds,
reporting portals it has inherited and refined.

Purpose is reframed within existing benchmarks.
Success is redefined through updated indicators.
Alignment at scale becomes an operational constraint.

And still, beneath the revision,
the old assumption persists:
that progress can be isolated,
quantified,
attributed—
that movement can be captured cleanly
without dragging the body along.

The logic is familiar.
The language has softened.
Rhythm remains.

Adjustments unfold across timelines, templates, and portals.
Every action reverberates—through people, through processes, through policy.
Recalibration becomes routine, and redundant.

Care is practiced in anticipation, accountable and traceable,
always already moving toward the next assessment.

The beat continues.

And yet—we circulate a slide showing a 36% increase in regular attendance
and accept invitations to speak with other districts about the steps we took to get there.

The superintendent is tasked with holding contradiction:
to honor local meaning and produce statewide legibility;
to foreground care and render it countable,
to trust centralization will drive localization.

Guidance arrives in cycles:

develop
implement
monitor
adjust
develop
refine
evaluate
report

A loop the body adapts to.

Autopilot.

The superintendent learns to anticipate future evidentiary demands—
for the question that will be asked later,
for the evidence that will be required
before the measure turns.

Leading becomes anticipatory,
responsiveness preparatory.
Care becomes something for the record,
with an audit already in mind.

[Suspension: Mandates]

Suspension is not silence.
A breath held before resolve—
a note sustained

waiting

for recognition.

Each year, Oregon districts are required to self-report compliance with Division 22 assurances. The demands are complex, the answers binary. In compliance. Out of compliance.

In my first year, I answered no twelve times. Not because the work was absent. Not because students were unserved. Not because practices were misaligned with legislative intent.

But because the work—relational, habitual, enacted—was not yet rendered into the written plans required by the law.

For years prior, our district, like most, reported full compliance. School boards must approve the report, but administrators set the bar for what counts as alignment. Division 22 lives adjacent to the accountability apparatus—near, but not entangled—more liability than responsibility.

It does not surface in grant narratives or improvement cycles; there is no specific Board training. The assurances drift—assumed rhythm rather than recorded line.

Naming noncompliance did not create new problems. It revealed old ones—the difference between doing and documenting, between plan and inscription, between care as practice and care as artifact.

The work took three years. Not because of resistance, but because mandates do not move at the speed of small districts. Meaningful plans require committees. Committees require representation. Representation requires time, trust, and continuity—

Mandates shifted. Guidance softened, tightened, rearticulated. What counted last year now no longer mattered. Timelines, however, remained firm.

State workers were generous. Supportive. Collaborative. The system, less so. Extending the work beyond a year requires more process; permission to suspend expectations is authorized only by the State Board.

Unfunded mandates are typically framed as financial strain. In small rural districts, hidden costs are temporal. Writing plans, updating plans, resharing plans—all while teaching, feeding, transporting, counseling, responding. Time, here, is infrastructure—systems and structures cannot be rushed without consequence.

Completion brought coherence—to me. I became more fluent in the score. More legible. More defensible. (A question creeps through the crack—not to measure success, but to refuse it, asking instead what this moment still carries.)

But, is the district better because of it? Did accountability deepen? Or, did we simply learn—again—how long a note can be held before it is permissible?

*Suspension ends eventually.
Not with rest,
but with the next measure.*

[Rubatos]

*Hold—
for students relocating mid-winter,
while school records, routes, and routines reconfigure.*

*Hold—
for teachers teaching through loss,
carrying classrooms alongside newly rearranged lives.*

*Hold—
for households navigating water that cannot be trusted,
while schools redefine community hub in terms of resource distribution.*

*Hold—
for land that teaches and sustains us,
even through fire, as overhead rotors pass.*

In musical terms, rubato allows a phrase to stretch or compress without breaking the tempo.
The measure holds. But the line shifts.

Rubato is not refusal.
It is time borrowed—taken carefully,
with awareness that it must be returned.

In superintendency, rubato is practiced quietly.
Listening across registers—
to staff capacity,
to community readiness,
to board cadence,
to the limits of one's own body.

Without rubato, trust erodes and infrastructure fractures.
With rubato, the system pressures.
Borrow too much time, debt accumulates.

Rubato is never solo.
It depends on others keeping the measure—
holding the frame,
tracking the long arc,
asking, Can you explain the timing?

There is NO downbeat in legislative time.

How long can a measure be held before the body forgets how to rest?

[Confluence: Measured Consent]

*Confluence is where currents meet—
not smoothly,
but with enough force to alter direction.*

Our board chair has long questioned standardized testing: its claims to objectivity, its reliance on comparison, its tendency to displace learning rather than reveal it.

We share a professional language and a history—performance-based assessment, formative practice, approaches that make learning visible without reducing it to a score.

Still, we are responsible for implementation of State-required assessments with fixed timelines and prescribed processes that do not bend easily.

The law is explicit: a district may not decide on behalf of parents that a student will not test.

In practice, this creates an uneven terrain.

Families with the time, knowledge, and confidence to navigate systems do so.

For everyone else, the district decides by default.

The question becomes not whether students test, but how consent is structured and recorded.

Not as defiance, but as clarification, we begin discussing a shift—from opt-out to opt-in.

A way of making visible who is asked, who decides, and who bears consequence.

Board members carefully raise concerns about compliance, positioning, and risk.

The concern is institutional, but considerate of impacts on me, a first year superintendent.

When the question turns to me—publicly and on the record—I answer unfiltered:

“I am accountable to our community, not to state testing procedures.”

The statement holds the room, suspending our attention and asking: Who becomes legible when we count—

and who disappears when we do?

The board acts, drafting a resolution that names us as an opt-in district.

The state responds quickly. Emails sharpen. Phone calls follow.

I respond consistently—again and again—across exchanges and meetings.
This change will matter less than the daily work of teaching well.
When students feel successful, and families feel respected, participation follows.

In the meantime, I speak with families directly—one by one—not to persuade, but to listen and to answer questions the system does not make room for.

We report Division 22 noncompliance. A year passes. Pressure on the district increases, and funding is threatened.

Participation rates rise.

Over months of discussion and correspondence, the resolution language used to describe consent shifts. No longer labeled opt-in or opt-out, it is now recognized as family-choice, operating within the required process.

The structure of accountability does not rupture; at the end of this cycle, we find ourselves close to where we began. What changes is not the policy framework, but the conditions under which it is enacted.

Trust has been built; families know my voice and understand that they can ask questions without penalty. They know they are partners in measuring what matters.

Some things count; others resist being counted.

*At the confluence of policy, practice, and community—
the current does not resolve;
it redirects.*

Voice II: The Board (Listening for Coherence)

The second voice enters in counterpoint.

The board agenda asks for coherence.

They listen:

Are we in compliance?

Are we improving?

Can you explain this?

Accountability here becomes *narrative discipline*.

The superintendent performs-for the board by smoothing temporal dissonance:
translating emergent needs into strategic plans,

sequencing harm so it becomes legible,
framing ethical tension as phased implementation.

We speak of serving all students
while addressing concerns voiced for only some.

Here, leadership is not command.
It is keeping time with others in the room—
as well as those beyond the walls.

The Board holds the Superintendent accountable,
and the Superintendent provides the account.

The superintendent is not solo, but *solí*—
a leading voice within a small ensemble,
listening, adjusting, making space for others to enter
without letting the score fall apart.

[Attenuation: Signal Noise]

A listening session.
Neutral facilitation.
Clear norms.
An open invitation.

No demands listed.
No outcomes promised.
No position taken—
only a time, a place, and a request to come
together.

The room was noisy
before anyone spoke.

(Some signals were distorted.)
(Some were amplified.)
(Some arrived carrying fear borrowed from
elsewhere.)

The system did not argue.
It adjusted levels.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT LISTENING
SESSIONS ON GENDER
INCLUSIVITY**

[School District] Board of Directors will be hosting two listening sessions regarding gender inclusivity. These facilitated sessions will provide opportunity for our community to share their input regarding efforts to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space for all students, specifically our gender diverse students. Written comment to be shared with the Board may be submitted at the RSVP link.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 24, 2024
SESSION #1: 10AM-12PM
SESSION #2: 6PM-8PM

@ [School District] MIDDLE SCHOOL
BUILDING
[Conference Room]

RSVP HIGHLY ENCOURAGED:
[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/RDSTHJUUA1AQA](https://forms.gle/RDSTHJUUA1AQA)

The flyer features a colorful illustration of a diverse group of students standing in front of a stylized globe. The students are of various ethnicities, ages, and genders, representing the community the sessions are for.

Listening was not consensus.
Presence was not endorsement.

We let the track play long enough
for the beat to settle.

[Calibration]

*Not everything needs to be said,
but everyone must feel carried.*

*So much already lives in the room—
still, we must hold a polyphonic pulse.*

*Stories have been told before.
Meals, too.
Context lingers.
We are connected.*

This moment asks for something else.

*Safety is a ground condition, not a resolved chord.
Pain is alive.
Fear circulates.
Harm ignores procedural boundaries.*

*Too much. Not enough.
Consensus does not beget healing.*

*Say what matters now.
Say it so it can travel.
Say it so no one has to ask twice.
Attenuate.*

*This is not about proving you know.
It is about knowing what to hold back
and what must land clearly.*

*Trust does not loosen the work.
It sharpens it.*

There is NO innocence in distributed listening.

[Witnessing: Deferred Care]

There is no innocence in distributed listening.

What is heard carries weight because it has already been lived.

The pool sits just beyond the edge of explanation—
not absent, not forgotten, but waiting.

It is remembered
not as a line item,
but as a place where summers were joyous,
where children learned courage by jumping,
where teenagers guarded children's lives,
and adults met up to play.

Deferred maintenance registers not as failure.
Instead, as waiting.
As hoping.
As believing that someone, someday,
will care just as deeply.

Years pass not as repair.
As only surface fixes.

When repair does not arrive, grief materializes.
Not all at once.
Not cleanly.

It settles into the building itself—
the pool emptied, walls rotting,
doors locked, windows clouding,
giant wooden beams still standing proud,
begging to be held differently than nostalgia allows.

Previous leaders return.
Rumor circulates.
Possibilities both thicken and thin.

Witnessing does not resolve this grief.
It keeps it present.

Not to reopen the pool through bake sales
or well-meaning proposals detached from scale.
Not to rehearse revival narratives
that mistake love for feasibility.

But to name what has been lost
without demanding its immediate return.

The superintendent does not manage this voice.
She listens for it.

Not for volume, but for tone.
For what is said in a minor key.
For what is repeated without agenda.
For what surfaces through silence.

The pool does not ask to be saved.
It asks to be understood—
not as a structure awaiting resurrection,
but as witness to what community once held
and is relearning to hold again.

Voice III: The Public (Community as Witness)

The third voice does not enter on cue.
It does not wait for public comment.

It arrives sideways, circulating through informal channels.

At the market, where local news moves through a game of telephone.
At the basketball game, where shared chants carry histories no spreadsheet can hold.
In the quiet after a community event, where cleanup rituals make room for new ideas to speak.
In Facebook comments, where locals reminisce about the way it used to be.

In rural places, accountability is immediate.
It circulates before explanations are articulated.

What is and can be known here is always situated, affective, relational, rhythmic—
circulating in time rather than reports.

Decisions echo—
as invitations extended or quietly withdrawn.

Here, correctness fractures.

What satisfies the state may not satisfy the community.
What aligns with guidance may rupture trust.
What is defensible on paper may feel violent in practice.

Witnessing names this without dismissing it.
Witnessing refuses false revival and shallow fixes.
Witnessing listens for what the community is asking to become—
not all at once,
not through one heroic project,
but through smaller, sustained work that builds capacity for trust.

The public voice does not demand answers.
It measures time unfolding.

It notices who returns.
It tracks what circulates.
It registers whether imagination thickens or thins.

This is accountability, too—
not as enforcement, but as memory with expectations;
not as compliance, but as care that will not leave.

What follows witnessing is not agreement.
It is echo.

Some echoes are loud and thin.
They travel fast, detach from context, exhaust the room.

Others move quietly.
They return.
They gather weight through repetition,
through presence,
through work.

Rumor fades.
Resonance remains.

Comments arrive quickly.
Some from people who have not been here in years.
Some who no longer have children in the schools.
Some who know story only by echo.

I do not respond.

Others sometimes do.

Not with the same words.

Not in agreement with each other.

From having been here.

From recent memory.

From proximity.

The thread moves on.

[Resonance: Echo]

The room does not fill all at once.

It gathers.

Tables are pushed together.

Paper spreads. Markers roll.

Cardboard, fabric scraps, bottle caps, string—
the contents of a shared junk drawer—
are set loose.

This is a senior project.

Not an assignment performed for credit,
but an invitation issued outward.

In this district, we do not ask students
to practice leadership someday.

We ask them to lead now—
not in front of adults,
but alongside them.

Often, they lead first.

They make the food.

They welcome people in.

They ask questions that do not presume answers.

Families arrive.

Neighbors follow.

Hands move.

People begin to build the town as they imagine it—
not from plans or permits,
but from memory, desire, and proximity.

Some ideas remix legacy events.
Others ask for a new name, a new feel, a new way the region might be known.

Models are shared across tables.
Stories travel. Lists form. Connections, too.

[Vitality is not announced, It is felt in the ripple effects.
Another meeting—this one led by others—at the Grange.
There have been no events there in years.]

A student-led follow-up another month later:
This time, the work is different.
Feasibility is named. Impact is weighed.
Existing projects are named, reconsidered, scaled.

Energy circulates.

And then, each participant lists their top three priorities.
Housing.
Water infrastructure.
Renovating the pool building.

All long-term needs.
All rooted in lack.
All shaped by deferred care.
Many have already burned out trying to carry these projects.

Hope bends backward.

Shaped by loss,
it often reaches for what once gathered us—
for structures that held joy
before they failed.

The witness does not judge this turn.
It notices.

It listens for what is being asked to return—
and for what has not yet been imagined.

Resonance does not erase grief.
It moves through it.

It does not arrive as solutions,
but as renewed circulation—
new people,
new hands,
new rhythms in old spaces.

Echo does not guarantee what will come next.
It only tells us what is still capable of returning.

What lingers is not resolution.
It is what remains.

[Residue]

*We heard the language of belonging.
We felt a door close.
We read the plan.
We felt the cut.*

We remember last time.

*Residue is not only what hurts.
It is what stays unnamed.*

*Loss settles into objects—
a building,
a program,
a line item circled year after year.*

*Grief learns the shape of what is gone
and forgets to name what it once held.*

*A pool.
A mill.
A classroom that stayed open late.*

*The structure becomes the memory.
The function fades.*

*What is loved hardens into specificity.
What is needed narrows into retrieval.*

*Hope is trained to look backward—
toward restoration,*

*toward repair of what was,
toward the promise that if this returns,
something else might ease.*

Imagination learns to speak in absence.

*Not what could gather us now,
but what we no longer have.*

*This is residue, too—
not failure,
not refusal,
but attachment without language.*

*The work is not to erase the longing.
It is to listen for what the longing is asking
to become.*

There is NO rest in carrying what remains.

[Somatic Load: Still Counting]

There is no single moment where this work enters the body.
It accumulates.

It arrives early, before language—
in weather systems tracked overnight,
in road conditions checked again and again,
in the low-grade alertness that does not resolve with a decision.

Twenty-five years in Phoenix schools.
No winter. No rural roads. Never a snow day.
Now I track storms as if they are personal—
watching forecasts fracture across models,
scrolling social media for photos of black ice and fallen trees,
trying to decide, before dawn, how much risk a community can carry
and still call it care.
How many days we can cancel and still be viewed as accountable.

In my first year, I did not sleep on those nights.
I stayed awake so I would not miss something—
a temperature drop, a road report, a tone shift in the comments.
The decision is rarely made before morning.

There is NEVER rest after the call is made.

The phone stays close.

The body asks: Where does responsibility go when it has no place to rest?

Neighbors text me about what they're seeing.

Cars circling.

Someone lingering near campus.

A name I recognize,
a face I don't.

They ask if I've noticed.

If it's been reported.

If it's something to worry about.

I text back while sorting the day—

camera feeds checked between staff meetings and board prep,
a call logged with dispatch for record, not response,
attention split across systems,
care threaded through surveillance
that never quite feels like part of the job,
but always is.

At the grocery store, I know too much.

I know who is struggling.

Who is angry.

Who is grieving.

Who thinks I have failed them.

We say hello.

Warmly.

Genuinely.

My body holds the rest.

At home, sometimes, a decision follows me inside.

My husband asks a question about the district that I cannot answer.

Not because I don't have words—

but because explaining requires a reopening of the work
that I have already sealed shut for the day.

We argue.

Not about the decision, exactly, but about the fact that it never leaves.

In emergencies, the boundary disappears completely.

Once, during a lockdown,

I sent the district-wide message—

urgent, precise, practiced—
then, my phone rang immediately.

“What the fuck,” he said.
Not in accusation.
In fear.

I assured him our sons were safe
while holding the line for the district,
while monitoring buildings,
while composing updates that could not afford tone drift.
My voice stayed even.
My body did not.

My office door is open by design.
Even when it is closed, it opens.
A knock arrives already turning the handle.
There is always one more thing.
One more person.
One more moment that cannot wait.

I forget to eat.
Not as self-neglect—
as displacement.
Attention migrates outward and does not return.

Now, a staff member brings me food.
Spicy chicken patties when they appear.
String cheese, every day.
Care arrives quietly,
wrapped in routine,
keeping me upright.

My email inbox swells and contracts.
It mirrors my health better than any metric.
I joke with a friend that when I die,
I want an away message posted that tells off education vendors.

She promises.
My shoulders drop.

This is not burnout.
It is not crisis.
It is not pathology.

It is what happens when responsibility has no off-switch—
when care is continuous,
when the work is relational,
when proximity replaces abstraction.

The body becomes the archive.
The inbox, the gut, the jaw, the breath—
they hold what cannot be scheduled,
what cannot be deferred,
what cannot be cleanly handed off.

This is residue, too.

There is no release here.
Only modulation.
Only the discipline of continuing
without pretending the body is untouched.

The beat does not stop. It counts.

Voice IV: The Body (Instrument Enters)

Before the role speaks, the body enters.

One body.
Many lines.

Multiple temporalities running at once:
the immediacy of student safety,
the slow churn of institutional change,
the fixed deadlines of the state,
the long memory of the community.

The subject enters first.
The body holds.
Something has to give.

Dissociation follows—
as function, not disorder.

Even when tempos conflict,
the body learns to vibrate
as if in perfect time.

This is technical brilliance.

And also exhausting.

This kind of listening
is only learned through strain.

The voices no longer wait their turn.

[Accumulation: Overlap]

The notification arrives on my phone.

A post.

A joke.

My child's name as author.

As a mother, my body tightens first—
heat, embarrassment, protection.

As superintendent, the calculus begins—
public visibility, precedent, harm.

The roles do not queue.

They arrive together.

There is no clean handoff
between private correction
and public responsibility.

I do not choose which role to be.

I hold both.

Later, the explanation will sound coherent.

In the moment,

the body keeps score.

[Metronome]

Tick — email

Tick — exhale

Tick — report

Tick — breat-
Tick — meeting
Tick — bre-
Tick — call
Tick — br-

There is NO breath in communication channels.

[Compression: Ethical Collision]

There are moments when the voices collide without harmonic resolution.

One such moment emerges when longstanding commitments meet immediate community need.

In an unincorporated rural district—
no city governance,
no municipal police,
one deputy stretched across an entire region—
basic safety is unmet.

The question is not ideological.

It is practical.
It is ethical.
It is relational.

What does safety mean when the state has already withdrawn?
Who is accountable when no other institution can hold the line?

The superintendent notices the pattern in the disarray.
She listens for what the land and the limits are already saying.

Principles do not disappear.
They strain.

[Strain]

Hold the line.
Feel it pull.

*Hold the line.
Feel it cut.*

Superintendent as Instrument of State and Soil

In these moments, the superintendent is revealed not as sovereign actor,
but as instrument.

An instrument of the state—
carrying its measures, metrics, mandates.

An instrument of the soil—
responsive to place, proximity, history, and need.

Sound passes through.
Resistance alters tone.

Superintendent as Instrument of State and Soil is tasked with submission—
completing reports, ensuring compliance, enforcing attendance codes.

But submission is not passivity.

Within these measures, we modulate.
We smuggle nuance into public comment,
press for flexibility in small-district rulemaking,
and name—carefully—what the metrics erase:
community vitality, carried in relation and place.

Policy is not only something we implement.
It is a tool for keeping institutional time.
It is a force that moves through bodies,
sometimes yielding,
sometimes delaying,
sometimes bending the phrase without breaking the score.

To lead is not to dictate the track.
It is to hum what the land offers back into being,
to echo the energy of the community.

This shaping is ethical.
It is embodied.
It is costly.

*The beat remains—
underfoot,
moving through us.*

1, 2, 3, 4

1,2,3,4

*Felt.
Uncounted.
Unnamed.*

The voices do not resolve. They continue, layered.

A fugue is often admired for its brilliance.
But admiration rarely names what it requires—
of the body,
of the room,
of the record.

This track does not resolve.
It sustains tension—
the discipline of staying in time
with deadlines, explanations, memories,
when time itself is fractured.

Nothing has failed.
Nothing has broken.
Still, the measures continue.

The questions return.
Laughter endures.
The weight accumulates.

The records remain.
The tempo holds.
The ground does not move.

The next track turns its attention
not to collapse,
but to what has been carried—

layered, inherited, sedimented—
long before the body begins to register the cost.

How can we keep time with what cannot be counted—without losing what counts?

Track 2: The Role We Inherited

Superintendent as Archive

The archive does not announce itself.
It hums.

Fluorescent lights.
Keys tapping.
Weather moving across tin.

These sounds do not belong to schooling alone.
They belong to administration—to infrastructures that manage bodies, buildings, and movement.
This is the soundscape the superintendent enters: bureaucracy and breath sharing the same air.

The role was never purely educational.
Its earliest forms were municipal and managerial, concerned less with pedagogy than with order.
The superintendent emerged alongside public systems that required coordination at scale—roads and roofs, attendance and compliance, budgets and boundaries.
Overseer and engineer.
Auditor and jailor.

The work was to ensure things held.

Buildings stood.
Ledgers balanced.
Children appeared where they were expected to be.

Education, law enforcement, and construction shared blueprints—efficiency, hierarchy, control.
Each relied on surveillance and scheduling, on the conversion of lived activity into legible record.
The superintendent functioned as translator: law into ordinance, policy into practice, complexity into countable form.

These histories have not receded.
They reverberate.

Safety plans written in the idiom of policing.
Attendance systems modeled on surveillance.
Budget spreadsheets resembling command centers.

What appears now as neutral procedure carries sedimented logics of governance.
The archive shows continuity where reform narratives promise rupture.

The superintendent inherits this role
not as author,
but as carrier.

Each day is spent inhabiting structures designed long before the present moment—structures
that assume order is maintained through measurement and control.

The language softens.

The logics remain.

Accountability enters here not as aspiration, but as inheritance.

Not episodic, but rhythmic—structuring attention, labor, and legitimacy through repetition.

Its work is slow.

Accumulative.

Archival.

It preserves comparability across time.

Stabilizes expectation across place.

Ensures continuity across leadership.

What is asked is not innovation, but alignment.

[Trust]

Land held.

Funds managed.

Returns expected.

Decisions authorized.

Risk mitigated.

Obligations met.

Value protected.

What if the words we inherit are doing work we never agreed to carry?

[Sediment I — LANGUAGE]

The word *accountability* does not begin in schools.

Its roots lie in *account*—to reckon, to count, to narrate a record—and *ability*, the capacity to render that account in a form that can be received, verified, and judged.

Beneath these terms, older meanings linger—
from roots associated with striking, cutting, stamping a mark.

From the beginning, accountability required translation.

Experience into evidence.

Relation into report.

Life into ledger.

[temporal: discipline]

Middle School/High School

Monday/Tuesday/Thursday

8:10 CREW

8:30-9:24 1st Period

9:24-9:34 Snack

9:34-10:28 2nd Period

10:32-11:12 3rd Period

11:16-12:10 4th Period

12:10-12:40 Lunch

12:44-1:37 5th Period

1:41-2:34 6th Period

2:38-3:48 7th Period

Elementary School

Wednesday

Open Gym 7:30

Breakfast 9:00

Classroom 9:30

Lunch/Recess 12:30

Classroom 1:10

Dismissal 3:40

What could not be rendered legible could not be held.

What could not be counted could not be defended.

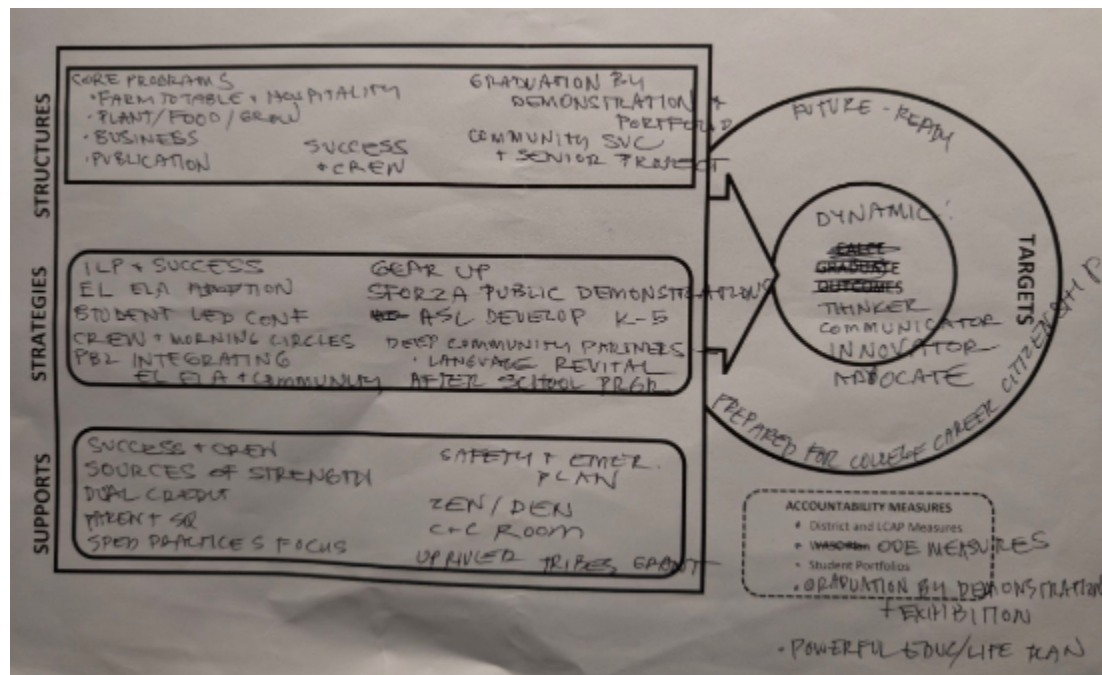
What could not be documented would [REDACTED].

Counting, here, is not neutral.

Counting is a cut.

[archival: residue]

Working Alignment Diagram
Portrait of a Graduate
Draft v. 7.31.23



What remains not because it works, but because no one knows it can be released?

[Sediment II — SYSTEMS]

The archive thickens through policy.

No Child Left Behind did not invent measurement; it accelerated it—
binding funding, legitimacy, survival to standardized outputs.

Later reforms softened tone.

The apparatus remained.

Measure.

Compare.

Intervene.

The Student Investment Account adds voice—community context, local priorities—while
multiplying reporting demands.

ESSER brought relief tied to documentation.

Oregon Senate Bill 141 arrives framed as recalibration: burden reduction, coherence,
alignment.

The banners change. The machinery persists.

Each layer adds fields, timelines, templates.
Each promises responsiveness while tightening the grid.

Accountability becomes less a single demand than an environment—
ambient, unavoidable, infrastructural.
Not just algorithms, but algo-rhythms—
systems that do not merely calculate, but keep time.

[status: assigned]

581-022-2060 Comprehensive School Counseling	In compliance	The district has met all of the requirements for this rule.	Not applicable
581-022-2100 Administration of State Assessments	Out of compliance	Worked with ODE towards an agreement for a [REDACTED] communication plan, approved in Summer 25.	Not applicable
581-022-2300 Standardization	In compliance	The district has met all of the requirements for this rule.	Not applicable

The map continues without us.

[Care]

We co-host a salmon ceremony with the Tribal Council, held as part of the end-of-year student exhibition of learning. Tribal members provide the salmon, bless the work, and build a ceremonial pit—a place for gathering, preparation, and quiet witnessing.

After the ceremony, the pit is moved. Not as refusal. Not as conflict. But it was removed. Lawn care resumed. The decision seemed small at the time. The ground was leveled; the grass returned. No announcement marked the change. The absence settled unevenly. Some felt it. Others mowed over it.

Superintendent responsibilities overwhelm the next year, no ceremony. In year 3, ceremony continues; the Tribal members rebuilt the pit. Not as restoration—what was disrupted cannot be undone—but as continuation. The work resumes with care, with patience, with the

understanding that remembering does not prevent loss, but makes it possible to return. Grief here is not resolved. It is carried forward, altered by interruption, but still held.

Land held.

Funds managed.

Returns expected.

Services absorbed.

Capacity redistributed.

Coverage maintained.

Positions shared.

Partnerships leveraged.

Needs acknowledged.

Recruitment ongoing.

Delivery adjusted.

Responsibility diffused.

Value protected.

Ceremony resumes.

Presence remains, altered but not gone.

In rural contexts, this accumulation is felt differently.

[ambient: account-ability]

School District 32
Compliance & Reporting Calendar (Excerpt)
Academic Year: 2019–2024

Date Due	Submission	Platform	Status
Oct 15, 2019	Division 22 Assurances	ODE Portal	Submitted
Dec 2, 2019	Integrated Guidance Narrative	EGMS	Submitted
Feb 14, 2020	Continuous Improvement Plan Update	Smartsheet	Submitted

Mar 31, 2020	Spring Data Collection	Secure File Transfer	Waived
Jun 30, 2020	Annual Report	ODE Portal	Submitted (Modified)
Oct 15, 2020	Division 22 Assurances	ODE Portal	Submitted
Dec 1, 2020	Distance Learning Assurance	Google Form	Submitted
Feb 12, 2021	Equity Lens Attestation	PDF Upload	Submitted
Jun 30, 2021	Annual Report	ODE Portal	Submitted
Oct 15, 2021	Division 22 Assurances	ODE Portal	Submitted
Nov 30, 2021	ESSER III Spending Plan	EGMS	Submitted
Feb 15, 2022	Integrated Guidance Update	Smartsheet	Submitted
Jun 30, 2022	Annual Report	ODE Portal	Submitted
Oct 15, 2022	Division 22 Assurances	ODE Portal	Noncompliant (12)
Dec 1, 2022	Corrective Action Plan	PDF Upload	Submitted
Feb 28, 2023	Monitoring Evidence	Shared Drive Link	Submitted
Jun 30, 2023	Annual Report	ODE Portal	Submitted
Oct 15, 2023	Division 22 Assurances	ODE Portal	Noncompliant (3)
Mar 1, 2024	Revised Policies & Procedures	Shared Drive Link	Submitted
Jun 30, 2024	Annual Report	ODE Portal	Submitted

What is being documented here—and what is being disappeared?

Related Folder Structure (Shared Drive)

- /Compliance
 - /2018-2019
 - /Board_Approved
 - /Assurances
 - /Monitoring
 - /2019-2020
 - /COVID
 - /Waivers
 - /Narratives
 - /2020-2021
 - /Distance_Learning
 - /Equity
 - /Attendance
 - /2021-2022
 - /ESSER
 - /Health_Safety
 - /2022-2023
 - /Division_22
 - /Policies
 - /Procedures
 - /Evidence
 - /Revisions_FINAL
 - /Revisions_FINAL_v2
 - /2023-2024
 - /Division_22
 - /Evidence
 - /Clarifications
 - /Correspondence

Standard Language (Repeated Across Submissions)

The district is committed to continuous improvement and ensuring equitable outcomes for all students.

Stakeholder input was solicited and considered.

Policies are aligned with state guidance and reflect local context.

Monitoring cycles are in place to ensure fidelity of implementation.

Board Agenda Footer (Recurring)

Action Item

Recommendation: Approve

Motion: ____

Second: ____

Vote: ____

Recommendation: Accept without changes, legal requirement

Email Subject Lines (Chronological)

- Division 22 Deadline
- Reminder: Division 22 Assurances Upcoming Deadline
- Thank You for Submission
- Panelist on Division 22 Professional Learning Series
- Input Needed: Compliance Status
- Technical Assistance Meeting
- Meeting Follow-up: Sample Plans included
- Instructional Materials Action Plan
- ACTION REQUIRED: Revision Due
- Additional Information Requested
- Monitoring Division 22 Compliance
- FINAL REMINDER: State Board Letter due
- Compliance Status Update

Notes Field (Auto-Saved)

District is making progress.

Timeline adjusted.

Evidence forthcoming.

Capacity constraints noted.

Last plan submitted. Robust. Misalignment to older standards

Follow up next cycle.

All that settles into matter

when responsibility has nowhere else to go?

Soiled artifacts—
layers of grief, memory, and hope.

[Sediment III — MATERIAL]

Accreditation requires an interview.
A small group. Parents.
A board member. Community partners.

There is a protocol.
Representation.
Evidence of alignment.

We assemble a group.
Not the usual voices.
Not the people who know how to perform these meetings.

They speak about what they have seen.
Not in the language of the application.
Not in the categories provided.

They talk about teachers creating conditions for their child to lead.
About building confidence through authentic experience.
About their child inspiring them to get involved in the community.
About leadership that does not announce itself.

Examples surface that never made it into the written materials.
Specific. Ordinary. Accurate.

The interview moves on.

Small numbers refuse anonymity.
Stories are asked to stand in for data.
The same people appear in multiple roles—
parent, staff member, board member, neighbor—
while the system insists on disaggregation.

Community vitality does not sit outside the archive.
It is pressed into it.

The archive is not only textual.

[Capital]

Plans drafted. Concepts revised. Timelines extended.

Bond funds allocated. Scope reduced. Priorities sequenced.

Asbestos abated. Flooring replaced. Spaces cleared.

Rooms repurposed. Storage expanded. Future use pending.

Architectural renderings archived. Multiple visions retained. No academic program assigned.

Decisions authorized.

Action deferred.

Value protected.

It lives in calendars and bell schedules.

In student information systems and audit trails.

In binders labeled *Compliance*.

In shared drives whose folder trees map decades of reform.

It lives in routines—annual reports, quarterly reflections, monitoring cycles—that organize time long before meaning enters the room.

Develop.

Implement.

Monitor.

Adjust.

The cycle repeats even when the community cannot.

In rural places—where schools function as social infrastructure, as food distribution, health access, gathering space—this temporal discipline rubs against lived necessity.

The archive keeps time differently than the land.

Differently than grief.

Differently than recovery.

And still, the archive holds.

1-

2-

3-

4-

[held: abeyance]

Board of Directors

Facilities & Program Updates (Excerpt)

POOL FACILITY

- Insurance coverage does not extend to reopening or rehabilitation.
- Risk assessment identifies safety concerns related to unsecured access.
- Recommendation approved:
 - Facility to remain closed.
 - Exterior access secured.
 - Interior boarded.
 - Regular monitoring for safety and unauthorized entry.
- No further action recommended at this time.

When does "no further action" become abandonment?

And when does it become permission to imagine otherwise?

MUSIC PROGRAM

- Board members note historical significance of the music program and its role in school culture.
- Interest among students and families acknowledged.
- Superintendent report:
 - Interest is developing organically.
 - Current staffing allocations do not support program reestablishment.
 - Master schedule does not allow for expansion at this time.
- Program not feasible within existing capacity.
- Continue to monitor interest.

(Item concluded.)

Who decides what enters the archive—and who must live in what it forgets?

Like archives, AI machines reveal what repeats—but cannot tell us what should be held. Both risk flattening what they surface unless judgement, memory, and relationship intervene.

[Sediment IV — ETHICS]

Accountability rarely announces itself as harm.
It arrives as care. As a promise.
As responsibility.

Loss appears first as omission.
Then as distortion.
Then as silence.

Programs disappear because they cannot be justified.
Relationships thin because they cannot be scaled.
Vitality erodes because it cannot be isolated.

Its violence is procedural.

These losses are not yet named as grief.
They are named as tradeoffs.
Lack of fidelity.
Constraints.
Limitations of the system.

The superintendent learns to live inside this ethical sediment—to keep time with what can be measured while carrying what cannot.
Dissociation follows—not as disorder, but as function.

The archive absorbs what the moment cannot hold.

This track refuses the fantasy of neutrality.
The score is not objective.
The archive is not innocent.

Measurement extracts.
Comparison disciplines.

To name accountability as regulatory technology is not to accuse individuals.
It is to recognize how counting became a way of cutting—separating communities from their own meanings, schools from their own rhythms, relations from their own weight.

This work does not seek a cleaner archive.
It seeks opacity.

Not everything must be rendered legible.
Not every relation should travel.
Not every loss can be accounted for without doing further harm.

Here, instruments begin to fall away.
The documentation recedes.
The explanations stop.

What remains is rhythm.
A kick drum.
Steady. 1–2.
Unadorned. 3–4.

Legacy is carried—not as intention, but as repetition.
What stays, often unwritten.
What is passed hand to hand, year to year, often without being chosen.

The archive does not close.
It hums.

It hums in framed photographs lining the hallway—
graduates posed and organized by school year,
their numbers swelling and shrinking in harmony with the timber economy.
Faces holding futures some were never allowed to reach.

It hums in routines that outlast people,
in expectations inherited rather than designed,
in structures that remember long after individuals are gone.

Legacy is not only what we celebrate.
It is what persists.
What is maintained.
What is difficult to interrupt.

And still, the superintendent stands inside this inheritance—
not to purify it, not to disown it,
but to notice all that has already been carried.

The next track does not move forward.
It turns toward the archive's other register—
what is preserved but not accounted for,
what is held without being measured,
what is known without being named.

All along, the archive has been holding—
waiting for a different kind of listening.

Silence, here, is structure.

What if the archive asked us what it should forget?

Break: Tuning the Ear

On refusal, orientation, and ethical listening

This break does not sit between tracks.

The kick quiets.

Listening recalibrates.

What follows is a tracing, a marking, a reaching toward—orientation rather than foundation, posture rather than procedure. It is not method in the conventional sense, but a refusal of methods that pretend neutrality while reproducing harm. This section does not ground what follows. It offers one place to enter.

There are no tidy reports of findings or claims of generalizable knowledge. Instead, this dissertation moves as a rhizomatic inquiry (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)—composed through relation, resonance, and return. It unfolds as a score rather than an argument: a set of movements, interludes, and motifs that can be encountered in multiple orders and revisited over time. Meaning does not accumulate linearly. It emerges through contact, repetition, and shift.

This work takes shape through stories, documents, policy artifacts, land, memory, and tension. It reflects the nonlinear and relational nature of rural superintendency, where leadership is lived across overlapping roles, temporalities, and spaces. The inquiry grows from three interrelated orientations—ontological, epistemological, and axiological. These are not frameworks to be applied. They are commitments that shape how this work moves, what it refuses, and what it protects.

Ontological Orientation: Entangled Being

This inquiry begins from a relational ontology in which being is not autonomous or pre-formed, but constituted through relation (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016). The self does not precede the world; it emerges through it. I am titled and performing as *superintendent*, yet I am not reducible

to this role. The superintendent, the district, and the community form an assemblage—a shifting configuration of bodies, discourses, structures, affects, and histories (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Puar, 2007).

There is no superintendent outside the hallway conversation, the board vote, the water system failure, the grieving student, or the community dinner. Power circulates through these encounters—and through me (Foucault, 1980). I wield institutional authority: I sign contracts, enforce discipline, write budgets, recommend hires and terminations. These actions are not merely administrative. They participate in world-making. Boundaries are drawn. Futures are authorized. Other possibilities recede (Braidotti, 2013).

These cuts do not accumulate into a coherent self. They are contingent, ethical, and consequential. The superintendent is not a stable subject but an ongoing material-discursive event—produced and producing through intra-action (Barad, 2007).

Epistemological Orientation: Emergent Knowing

Knowledge in this inquiry is not extracted, transferred, or possessed. It is emergent, co-composed, and felt. It arises through situated encounters: in clearing blackberry bramble, in misreading a community concern, in the silence following a board vote, in the hesitation before a student speaks. Knowing moves through bodies and across time. It resists assumptions of objectivity, distance, and control.

Like a beat felt before it is named, knowing emerges in the porous boundary between experience and expression (Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2019).

Here, knowing is understood as relational accountability—not what is known, but how one is accountable to what is known (Simpson, 2014; Wilson, 2008). This inquiry does not aim to

persuade or conclude. It invites. The reader is not a consumer of findings but a co-composer; meaning depends on presence.

Knowledge is not held by individuals alone, but distributed across people, practices, tools, land, and time—what Hutchins (1995) describes as cognition that emerges through coordinated activity rather than isolated minds. In this sense, communities do not merely contribute knowledge; they are sites of knowing, carrying histories, refusals, and responsibilities that exceed any single account (Simpson, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2014).

Epistemological integrity, then, requires enactment. To challenge disciplinary logics, hierarchical authority, and extractive models of knowledge, this dissertation must move differently than the traditions it unsettles. Success is not measured by coherence or citation count, but by whether something shifts—a breath caught, a habit unsettled, a practice questioned, a policy held differently. There is no single outcome and no final knowing. What remains is a score—to be returned to, listened for, moved with, danced to, remixed—improvised, partial, and alive.

Axiology: Toward Reciprocity, Refusal, and Becoming-With

The ethical stakes of inherited accountability are not abstract. When accountability is treated as neutral infrastructure rather than a relational practice, harm becomes procedural, responsibility diffuses upward and outward, and the labor of care is absorbed by individuals who did not design the systems they are asked to uphold. This inquiry takes shape in response to that displacement.

This work refuses the commodification of education and the reduction of students, schools, or communities to outcomes, data points, or economic potential. Ethical leadership is never

neutral. Every policy, every meeting, every silence participates in decisions about who matters, what becomes visible, and what is allowed to flourish.

Grounded in feminist and Indigenous ethics of care and reciprocity (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2005; Tronto, 1993; Kimmerer, 2013), this inquiry resists the isolated leader archetype in favor of leadership as co-becoming with students, staff, land, and story. Reciprocity is not soft; it is demanding. It requires sustained, embodied presence—listening deeply, showing up fully, staying with tension rather than resolving it too quickly. Presence, here, is a praxis of accountability.

Refusal operates not as negation, but as generative stance. This work resists damage-centered research and the extraction of community suffering for academic consumption (Tuck, 2009). Musical movements, poetic mappings, and strategic opacity function as ethical technologies (Glissant, 1997): ways of honoring community knowledge while protecting it from surveillance, simplification, and capture.

Postqualitative Autoethnography: Composing as Diffraction

This dissertation moves through a form of postqualitative autoethnography that refuses the coherent, centered “I” privileged in traditional inquiry. The superintendent-I is not the protagonist of this work, but a site of interference—where institutional, relational, and ecological forces meet. This is neither auto nor ethnographic in the conventional sense; it is a field of material-discursive interference, a body-in-relation shaped by what passes through it (Mazzei, 2007, 2013).

I am not trying to find myself in the writing. I am tracking what moves through the roles I inhabit, and what those movements make possible—or impossible. Composition becomes an act of

diffraction: reading the world and myself through one another, noticing where themes repeat, invert, distort, or drop out (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2004). This way of writing is not stylistic choice; it is required by a role that cannot be understood from outside its entanglements.

By listening for downbeats and off-beats; for loops, drops, and returns; for the rests that shape the measure as much as what is played, this work leans into tension rather than resolving it. It asks what becomes possible when we move *with* what strains us.

I did not use generative AI to write this dissertation. I used it to hear it—to surface patterns I could not always see from inside the work. I brought the machine fragments: fieldnotes without names, stories without identifiers, policy language without conclusions. I asked it to listen for rhythm.

I asked:

What keeps repeating?

Where does the tension refuse to resolve?

What is being carried that never gets named?

What came back were not sentences I could keep. They were structures I could feel.

The machine returned patterns—recurring motifs of strain, care, delay, and deferral. It surfaced what I could not always see from inside the work: how often I returned to water, to thresholds, to bodies holding what systems dropped. These became the backbone lyrics—the skeletal score beneath the tracks.

But the machine also asked me questions back.

It asked:

What are you protecting by refusing to specify?

Where does opacity serve care, and where does it shelter harm?

What keeps getting named, and what never does?

Those questions did not appear in the text as quotations. They appear as
questrains—interruptions that slow the tempo of accountability long enough for something else
to be heard.

Nothing settles here.

Something loosens.

What moves you may not be what moved me.

That difference matters.

Carry what resonates.

Let the rest fall away.

We are labeled;

I am and am not these labels.

We are enculturated;

Western culture is and is not me.

We are storied;

I am and am not these stories.

We are socially constructed;

White. Female. Administrator. Each word both reveals and conceals me.

Who am I? Who are we becoming?

What forms us—this land, this labor, this lineage of names and norms?

What shapes us—ritual or rupture, soil or system?

Where is the boundary between what we inherit and what we choose?

What possibilities hide between doorframe and decision?

Track 3: The Role We Cannot Set Down

Superintendent as Relational Node

The superintendent is not the center.

She is the node—

a node the system insists upon.

A forced crossing point

where lines converge—

policy, history, land, kinship, loss.

Nothing passes through untouched.

Nothing arrives alone.

The superintendent is surrounded.

Not held.

Not accompanied.

Surrounded by demands that do not meet,

by needs that do not coordinate,

by systems that speak to one another

only through her.

// routing table active

// packets forwarded, never neutral

In rural places, this node is not abstract.

It has a name.

A face.

A family connection.

The superintendent does not stand between systems and people.

She is braided into both.

// no isolation permitted

// dependencies unresolved

Every decision tightens or loosens something else.

Node

•

An infinitely small, intensely bright point of light
in an otherwise dark void.

In the far distance,
another.

A thin thread forms
as connection develops.

Another light.
Another connection.
Another thread.

Again and again—
a circuitry of light,
threads crossing, layering, thickening,
shaping through and around,

•

A body.
Not assembled.
Not chosen.
Shaping.

You are these relationships.
You are this tangle.

At a distance, the first lights continue weaving—
threads extending outward,
crossing, layering, thickening,
forming other webs,
other tangles.

Everything visible is relational.
Objects, ideas—material and alive—
becoming knots of held relations
from the past,
the present,
and the future.

•

No thread arrives alone.

Relational Density

In small rural districts, relationships are not an added layer of leadership.

They are the infrastructure.

The parent is also the bus driver.

Board members are auntie, community partner, and friend.

The student you disciplined last week texts you for a ride to school tomorrow.

Distance collapses.

Accountability becomes immediate.

```
// proximity = true  
// abstraction disabled
```

What happens at school
moves through the region before the ink dries.

Community vitality here is not a program or indicator.

It is people showing up
and doors staying open—
whether grief circulates or congeals.

```
// IF silence persists  
// THEN reroute through rumor
```

Grief Enters (Unnamed)

Grief does not arrive all at once.

It seeps.

It lives in:

- the empty seat after winter break

- the student who stops turning in work when eviction papers come
- the graduate who leaves for college and does not last the year
 - the quiet of the abandoned timber mill

```
// no event listener registered
// accumulation continues
```

Grief accumulates without being named.

There is no reporting category for this.

No allowable use of funds.

No growth target.

```
// grief != countable
// redirect output
```

What if grief is the variable that moves everything—
but appears in no equation?

So it moves sideways—

fixing as default,

discomfort managed,

pain unheld—

into behavior referrals,

into absences,

into staff burnout,

into silence.

```
// exception caught
// error reclassified as misconduct
```

What kind of accountability exists when there is no distance left to hide?

Institutional Logics Felt in the Body

The superintendent holds the line
inside systems designed for extraction.

Counting as cutting.

Measurement as separation.

// CUTS = 1.01^n
// efficiency increases as care thins

What happens when harm is procedural—and no one is responsible?

The same logics that:
turned land into timber;
bodies into labor units;
schools into outputs—

now ask districts to account for outcomes
without accounting for abandonment.

// SUM = prior investment - maintenance
// IF SUM < 0: continue anyway

When the state retreats,
the school remains.

When healthcare disappears,
the school remains.

When housing collapses,
the school remains.

What remains is not extra—
It is the remainder.

// fallback institution engaged

And still, we are asked:
Are students learning?

// query requires boolean
// context ignored

The Line (Strain Returns)

Holding the line does not mean holding firm.
It means holding tension.

Between:

- safety and care
- principle and proximity
- what you believe and what the moment demands

// conflicting inputs detected
// prioritize continuity

Continuity does not choose itself.

Someone decides what breaks later
so something can hold now.

The superintendent makes the call.
The system records the outcome.

// responsibility does not distribute

Sometimes the line stretches.
Sometimes it cuts.

Sometimes it breaks quietly,
and no one marks the time.

// failure logged
// no alert triggered

The Body Pays

This is where grief finally registers.

Not as feeling,
but as function.

Sleep fragments.

Listening sharpens past comfort.

Dissociation becomes skill.

// process enters adaptive mode
// sensation dampened

You learn to carry stories
without showing where they land.

You learn which losses can be spoken
and which must be absorbed.

*// SELECT * FROM grief*
// WHERE visibility = permitted

What kind of system requires dissociation to function?

This is not pathology.
It is adaptation.

But it costs.

// cost externalized
// body absorbs remainder

This is not isolation.
It is loneliness produced at the point of convergence—
where responsibility cannot be shared,
only routed upward.

Folder Inserts

Folder: Timber

- Seven mills once ran
- The industry built the school
- Environmental protections arrive
- Mills close
- Those with means leave
- Land stays in families
- Work does not
- Poverty rises
- Families double up
- Homelessness increases
- Graduation portraits thin
- Seventy becomes five
- The school remains
- Built for a town that no longer exists
- Holding a future not yet defined

// legacy persists

// identity unresolved

// repair deferred $\rightarrow \lim_{x \rightarrow 0^+} \frac{1}{x} = \infty$

If we are not timber, what gathers and grows?

Folder: Placements

- Emergency kinship placements without services
- No notification of educational decision-making authority
- Court timelines misaligned with school realities
- Information arriving through the students
- Services promised, then withdrawn
- Placement overwhelmed
- Placement dissolves

// case closed

// responsibility persists

When responsibility for care is undefined, who gathers and grows?

Folder: Dropouts

- Not failure—disconnection.
- Attendance thins.
- Credits stall.
- Schedules no longer fit lives already in motion.
- Paperwork incomplete.
- Forms unsigned.
- Requirements unmet.
- Students' faces will never be displayed in the halls.
- Files close.
- Counts adjust.
- The system stabilizes.
- No alarm sounds.
- No visit scheduled.
- No return plan funded.

// threshold crossed

// eligibility revoked

// case closed

When disconnection is logged and no one returns, who gathers the remainder?

Folder: Suicide

- RIP Nicholas Cabaiz
- County-wide adolescent suicide
- Losses nearby
- Connections carried into our halls
- No deaths here
- No distance either
- Substances mute what language cannot

- Grief is distributed, unmetabolized.
- Staff trained
- Safety plans written
- Watchfulness sustained
- Conversations repeated
- Nights monitored
- Every concern escalates
- Every plan routes upward

// set termination conditions to zero

// responsibility → ∞

Students here know death well.

When nothing “happens,” everything is happening.

*Cultivating spaces where children do not kill themselves
is not a program.*

*It is a condition schools are holding—
again and again—
without endpoint.*

We begin with introductions. An email, a meeting, a conversation that holds laughter more than formality. Tribal Council welcomes us through humor and protocol. I propose a co-application to fund a position to support Indigenous families across the region. They agree, we shape the proposal together. Formal approval follows. Grant submission fails; no funding arrives. Yet, the partnership continues. Meetings, conversation, opportunities—relationships persist beyond the ledger.

Later, the Tribe and Foundation support school garden expansion; fences are erected not as barriers, but to allow the food to feed the cafeteria. Native plants—local species and First Foods like camas—are added, seeds provided through tribal connections. The garden becomes a site of care, instruction, and attention to cycles already in place: growing, tending, harvesting.

Knowledge moves through hands, soil, and taste, rather than through directives or schedules.

Meetings held. Hands planted. Seeds given. Care absorbed. Responsibility learned.

Accountability practiced. Relationship maintained.

Accountability Meets Relational Ethics

Are schools responsible for learning—or for living?

In places where other institutions have collapsed,
the question cannot hold.

// scope expanded without resources

Relational accountability emerges here—
not as an alternative system,
but as an ethical necessity.

It does not redistribute responsibility.
It concentrates it:
clarifying who must respond
when institutional recourse is exhausted.

It is not about outcomes.
It is about who stays with whom
when what counts
can no longer be counted.

*// IF metrics == null
// THEN care()*

No End Conditional

Grief does not resolve.

It redistributes.

// LOOP; DO WHILE system == operational

The node holds—

until the body does.

And still, the line remains.

Power circulates to balance the system.

Grief circulates to remind us the cost.

Both move through the superintendent.

// END PROCESS

// circuitry continues

Grief bleeds out—

and resides, hardened

in infrastructure cracks.

Food holds bodies through long afternoons.

Water is continuity whose loss is measured in hours.

Safety steadies what fear disrupts.

Connection prevents disappearance.

// deferred maintenance = critical care

What keeps collapsing when nothing is allowed to be repaired?

When all the needs arrive at once, the load shifts.

Coda: One Body

From within a relational ontology, I experience my work not as a single position but as a distributed constellation of becoming—a superintendent, yes, but also custodian, confidant,

security, student, caretaker, witness. These roles are co-present, overlapping, and uneven. I do not shed one to put on another. They do not arrive together as support; they arrive together as demand (Arendt, 1958; Tronto, 2001).

Temporalities refuse to behave, too. There is no neat linearity in schools or rural life. The past insists on showing up in new building plans and in the faces of grandchildren who carry their elders' legacies and traumas. The future hovers in grant reports and kindergarten enrollments. And the present is a blur of weather alerts, student crises, and silent shifts beneath the surface of policy implementation. Time loops, doubles back, refuses coherence (Barad, 2017; Shotwell, 2016). Being in time eclipses being on time (Jacobs, 2021), yet schools are powered by bells, age-based grade levels, and master schedules.

Place, too, is unstable. There is the "district" as defined by boundary lines on a map. But there is also place as felt: the morning fog, the hush of trees, the layers of paint on storied rocks, the legacies of graduates portrayed in our halls—the swelling and shrinking of their class sizes marking the collective story of timber, industry, and town. The community is not reducible to any demographic description. It is a thick weave of living and more-than-living relationships—a place made through gathering, grieving, working, resisting, naming (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; Ingold, 2011).

If place is lived and felt, space is imposed—abstracted through boundary lines, funding formulas, achievement metrics, and state-sanctioned narratives. Space becomes the "district" in the eyes of the Department of Education, the "rural" code in a grant application, the mapped liquification line accidentally shifted in a government office that decides half a building is earthquake proof and the other half not. As Massey (2005) reminds us, space is not neutral or static—it is produced through power, discourse, and relation. Space attempts to stabilize what place resists: its multiplicity, its becoming. Lefebvre's (1991) notion of "representations of space"

helps articulate how institutions conceive and regulate the world from above, often in tension with how it is lived from below. These abstractions shape our schools—how they are resourced, how success is measured, how belonging is administratively granted or denied. In my role as superintendent, I live at the fault line between place and space, trying to translate across these logics without reducing one to the other. The district is not only a place—it is also a system of spatialized expectations, stories told at a distance. This project leans into that tension, refusing resolution. It asks not only where we are, but which forces govern where we are allowed to be.

In this dissertation, I want to hold open multiplicity. I do not wish to analyze it into parts, nor extract patterns from the mess. I want to explore:

- What shifts when space is not a backdrop but a force—when maps, mandates, and measurements meet memories, footsteps, and fog?
- What does it mean for a community to be both site and subject, archive and actor, more-than-human and more-than-now?
- How is superintendency composed in the in-between—where official roles meet daily improvisations, and institutional maps brush up against lived geographies?

This is not a study of *the* superintendent or *the* community. It is an inquiry into how roles, bodies, and places come to matter through their relations (Barad, 2007), and how those relations shift the shape of leadership, care, and possibility in rural education.

Break: Questrains

On accountability, trust, and the tempo of becoming

This break does not resolve the work that came before it.
It lingers.

The line has been held.
The node has carried.
Grief has circulated without permission.

What follows is not a new argument, but a turning of attention—
away from answers that close
and toward questions that stretch.

Accountability, as it is most often practiced, arrives as a demand for clarity:
What happened?
Did it work?
Did the numbers move?
Who is responsible?

These are not neutral questions. They are questions engineered for transport—
designed to travel upward,
to be received at a distance,
to produce legibility across systems that do not share place, memory, or consequence.

They are questions that compress.

Over time, these questions harden into an environment—
ambient, unavoidable, infrastructural.

No pause written in.
No rest marked.
No fermata for grief.

Algo-rhythmic accountability: less a moment of reckoning than a condition of being.
No one says it aloud anymore.
1, 2, 3, 4
counts anyway.

This is not cruelty.
It is procedure.

This logic is visible in contemporary policy language that frames accountability as alignment, streamlining, and shared responsibility. Oregon's 2025 Education Accountability Act (SB 141) speaks in the register of care and collaboration—of *"shared responsibility," "public*

transparency,” *technical assistance,*” and *continuum of supports*—while simultaneously extending the reach of standardized metrics across time and territory.

Targets are developed.
Progress is reviewed.
Determinations are made.
Supports are triggered.

The system listens—but it listens for itself.

And yet, alongside these compressive questions, another kind of questioning persists—often unnamed, rarely authorized, impossible to abandon in rural life.

Questions that stretch rather than close.
That orient toward vitality rather than verification.
That ask not only what happened,
but what must be carried forward.

These questions do not resolve cleanly.
They stretch through strain.

I call these *questrains*—
questions that extend toward community vitality rather than measurable outputs;
questions that do not simplify complexity, but ask who is willing to remain inside the messiness.

They do not ask: *What does the data show?*
They ask instead: *What is the community asking to become?*

Questrains are not inefficient.
Their answers are slow.

They require proximity.
They demand memory.

These questions are not taught in administrator licensure courses. But they are recognized immediately in the practice of rural leadership.

The felt difference between a question asked from a distance
and one that grows through relations.
Between measuring success and knowing who shows up with chain saws when roads are blocked.
Between knowing what the data shows and recognizing the quiet ways a community keeps itself alive.

Policy accountability, as currently configured, privileges end states over lived pathways.
It asks leaders to declare where they are going,
but rarely accounts for what must be carried along the way.

Accountability in rural places moves differently.

Here, knowledge is not generalized,
it is intimate.

Trust is not an abstraction.
It is built through repeated encounters—
shared meals, shared loss, shared risk—
daily practices that do not scale,
that resist standardization,
that refuse to be cut into indicators.

To lead here is not to reject accountability,
but to live its contradiction—
liability to the state,
response-ability to place;
counting what can be isolated
while making what can only be held together count.

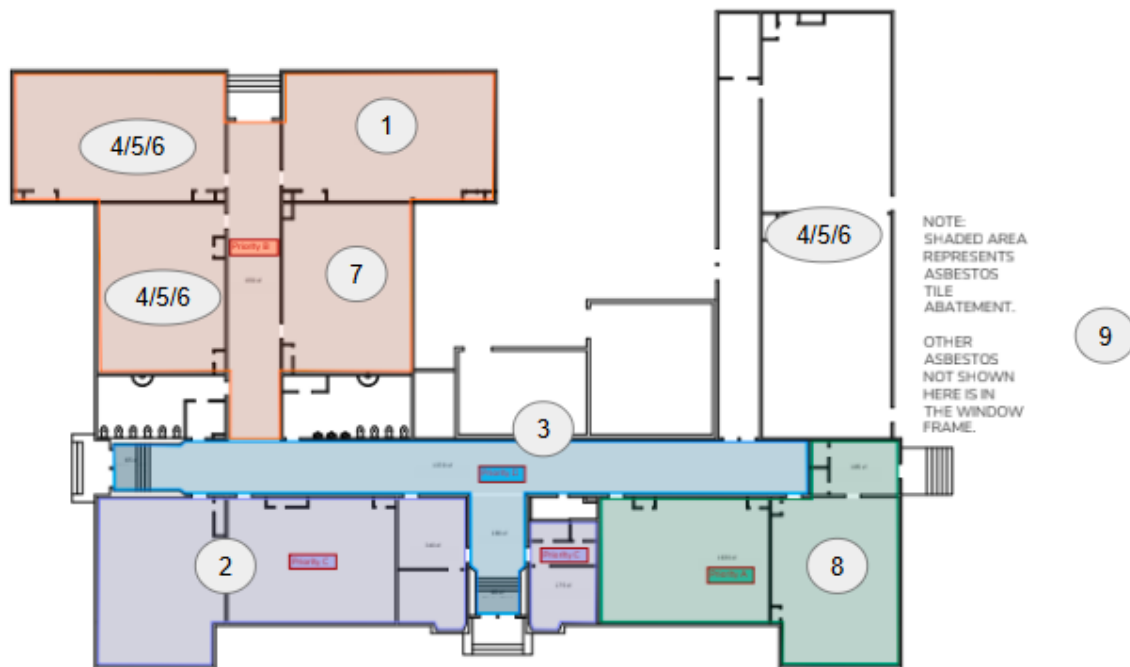
Questrains do not replace metrics.
They interrupt them—
surfacing not as answers,
but as questions about the questions themselves:
examining whether the questions we are trained to ask
are sufficient for the places we are accountable to.

They slow the tempo just enough to notice what the beat has been flattening—
and refuse to let all that has been flattened
disappear again.

Track 4: Between Space and Place

Superintendent as Infrastructure / Place-Maker

This is a diagram of constraint: nothing shown here moves without first passing through abatement—the metabolization of accumulated harm.



— Asbestos abatement (*Threshold Condition*) – *nothing can move until addressed.*

1. Art Room (*Legacy Name*)
2. Rental (*Current Partner*)
3. HVAC (*Outstanding Need*)
4. Storage (*Accumulated Curriculum & Materials*)
5. Storage (*Accumulated Equipment & Furniture*)
6. Storage (*Deferred Care*)
7. Community Resource Center (*Unoccupied*)
8. Community Kitchen (*Speculative*)
9. Phase 0 Garden (*Emergent*)

This track is not a walk through a building.
It is a blueprint.

Not the building as remembered,
but the building as it is asked to hold—
bodies, systems, grief, care, time.

A blueprint does not tell stories.
It diagrams intentions.
It reveals priorities.
It shows what must carry weight,
where pressure will travel,
and which failures will remain invisible until something gives.

What follows is not only metaphor—
It is a tracing of the possibilities of place
and of how space governs what becomes.
It is infrastructure.

Legend

Every blueprint includes a key—
symbols for load-bearing walls,
points of entry and exit,
circulation paths,
systems that make occupancy possible.

This legend must also name what cannot be drawn.

Deferred care.
Unrecognized labor.
Unfunded mandates.
Grief absorbed into routine.

The superintendent appears here not as occupant,
but as *maintenance*—
answerable when systems fail,
responsible for ensuring they hold long enough...

This blueprint does not capture intention.
It captures constraint.

Accountability enters here not as judgment,
but as load.

Thresholds / Entry Points

(Where Belonging Is First Negotiated)

Every building teaches at the door.

Who enters.

How.

Under what conditions.

With what assumptions.

In rural schools, thresholds do more than regulate access.

They manage fear, trust, visibility, and safety—
often in the absence of other institutions that might share the load.

Here, the superintendent's work is not symbolic.

It is procedural.

It is ethical.

It is immediate.

Foyers rarely appear in leadership documents.

They are not featured in strategic plans,
graduate portraits,
or vision statements.

Because this is where the day begins.
Where trust is either extended or deferred.
Where a body learns, immediately,
what kind of school this is allowed to be.

[Load Point: Foyers]

Who must prove they belong before they are allowed entry?

Foyers are where policy meets posture.

Arrival is not neutral here.
It is filtered through locked doors, sightlines, signage, and timing—
through who is expected,
who is tolerated,
and who must be verified before being welcomed.

Foyers are not only front desks and locked vestibules.
They also include the side doors left ajar,
entrances known but unmarked,
pathways opened by familiarity, recognition,
and who is already known.

In rural regions near larger districts, these thresholds take on additional weight.
Small schools often become default alternatives—
not by designation,
but by gravity.

Students arrive carrying needs that have already exceeded other systems' tolerance.
This is not selection.
It is accumulation.

Each arrival brings belonging—
and additional load.

Here, inclusion is not a slogan.
It is a question of capacity.

The superintendent inherits this tension at the threshold—
where enrollment is survival,
care is obligation,
and systems are finite.

To keep doors open is an ethical commitment.
To recognize when systems are nearing failure is also one.

Leadership here is not a choice between welcome and responsibility,
but the ongoing practice of calibration—
deciding, again and again,
how much weight can be taken on
without breaking what students rely on to stay.

What a door does to a body is lived curriculum.

Hallways

(Movement, Surveillance, and What Will Not Stay Put)

Hallways are not neutral space.
They are the building's circulatory system—
where supervision, movement, conflict, and care intersect.

Circulation plans do not produce belonging;
repeated recognition does.

What has no classroom,
no office,
no program
ends up here.

Grief moves through hallways.
So does discipline.
So does surveillance.
So does care that has
not yet found a name.

The superintendent rarely lingers here,
yet is accountable
for everything that happens
within these lines.

What moves through here that has no room to stop?

[Load Point: Circulation]

What circulates here long after it should have been resolved?

Hallways are designed for passage.

They assume movement with purpose—
class to class, bell to bell.

They also carry messages.

Flyers layered over flyers.

Student projects pinned, praised, replaced.

Announcements posted where no one lingers.

What circulates here is not only bodies,

but values—

who is named,

who is missing,

what success looks like at a glance.

Visibility is uneven.

Duration is brief.

What remains is what can withstand constant motion.

Students wander here—

sometimes to avoid class,

sometimes to find one another,

sometimes because staying put

is harder than moving on.

In this rural school, lockers line the halls

but are rarely locked.

Food is shared.

Belongings pass hand to hand

without formal permission.

Boundaries blur.

Resentments build.

Hallways are where self-management competes with distraction.

Trusted with responsibility,

students are pulled sideways—

toward rumors,

toward urgency,

toward someone else's crisis.

Passes admit movement.

Who is allowed to circulate.

Who must stay put.

Who is assumed to belong anywhere
and who is questioned everywhere.

Passes are enforced unevenly.

Movement is negotiated,
not simply regulated.

The hallway absorbs this inconsistency—
producing friction,
confusion,

and resentment that attaches to bodies
rather than rules.

Hallways are the most surveilled space in the building.

Cameras mounted high.

Sightlines extended.

Movement logged for after the fact.

They show where and when—
not why.

During a lockdown, circulation stops.

Doors close.

Hallways empty.

What usually flows is forced to still.

In those moments, the purpose of hallways becomes clear:
they exist to move bodies
until movement itself becomes calculated risk.

The superintendent encounters hallways indirectly—
through footage reviewed,
patterns noticed,
incidents triangulated by time and location.

The blueprint shows width, length, exits.
It does not show calculation.
It does not show who is bracing.

Circulation sets values in motion—who is named, who is seen, and who learns to keep moving.

Space / Place

(read across, not down)

How space is imposed—and place endured—counts.

To whom and for what?

Column Logics (Not Definitions)

- **Space**

- ordered
- designed
- legible
- routable
- scalable
- accountable
- inherited
- maintained

- **Place**

- lived
- storied
- affective
- relational
- resistant
- situated
- unfinished
- metabolizing

The superintendent tills the ground between these, without promise of yield or return.

Classrooms

Containment, Repurposing, and Instruction Overload

Blueprints label classrooms
by number, capacity, and intended use.

Room 1.

Room 12.

Science.

Kindergarten.

The plans assume containment—
learning contained by walls,
students contained by desks,
outcomes contained by measures.

[Load Point: Learning Beyond the Walls]

Who is responsible for what this learning returns to the community?

In practice, classrooms do not stay inside themselves.

They stretch into community spaces—
into food systems,
into land-based learning,
into vitality projects that ask students
not only to learn,
but to take action.

This work does not replace instruction.
It is instruction.

Classrooms become
counseling rooms,
food distribution centers,
de-escalation spaces,
grief holding cells,
launch points for action that cannot wait
for carefully crafted unit plans.

Curriculum frameworks do not hold grief; people do

Instruction expands.
Measures do not.

The classroom stretches to hold this.

Literacy becomes contribution—
not just access,
not just consumption,
but creation that must travel outward
into gardens, markets, watershed work, shared meals.

Math becomes constraint—
not only computation,
but the defining and redefining of limits:
time, materials, safety, capacity, hunger.

Science moves outdoors
because land refuses abstraction.
The classroom leaks—
mud on the floor,
weather in the schedule,
curriculum shaped by place.

None of this pauses the clock.

Interim assessments arrive on time.
Growth targets remain fixed.
State summative tests wait impatiently
For properly shaped instruction.

Teachers carry the contradiction—
designing learning expansive enough to matter
and narrow enough to be counted.

There is no additional time.
No altered metric.
No place in the reporting structure
to name the work of holding.

When teachers are invited to help design classrooms,
storage becomes a central concern.

Where do we put what accumulates?
Materials.
Food.
Clothes.
Projects that do not end on Friday.
Emotions that cannot be sent home.
Learning that refuses containment.

Storage is not about organization.
It is about survival.

The superintendent notices not what is taught,
but what the room is asked to absorb.

When space changes function, learning changes form.

Cafeteria

Nourishment, Regulation, and the Ethics of Provision

Food is not supplemental in rural schools.
It is foundational.

Nutrition services operate in the red—
here, and everywhere.

Federal reimbursement follows meals served,
not meals desired.

Quality shapes participation.

Participation shapes viability.

When care survives only by breaking rules—whose rules matter?

[Load Point: Provision with Care]

What is given here that no ledger can hold?

Rules govern what counts as lunch—
how it is prepared,
what may be offered,
what must be discarded.

The regulations are precise.

The outcomes are rarely nourishing.

Students know good food.

They say so in every listening session.

They ask for freshness.

For salads!

For meals that carry the work they've already done in our gardens.

We listen.

We adapt within constraint.

We buy local when we can—
knowing it costs more,
knowing it matters anyway.

The system discourages redistribution.

Waste is safer than generosity.

The rules assume misuse;
not scarcity, nor hunger.

Staff stretch the regulations as far as possible—

choosing provision over compliance
when the two no longer align.

Some care does not survive audit.

The cafeteria teaches daily—

who lingers,
who takes seconds,
who watches to see what extras remain.

Community gathers here—

for meals,
for meetings,
for celebration,
for grief.

The superintendent's role is less host than guarantor:

ensuring nourishment continues
when households cannot,
whether rules allow or not.

Provision is pedagogy.

Offices

Confidentiality, Containment, and the Absence of Quiet

Offices are drawn as fixed rooms—
for single-occupancy,
with doors that close
and walls that hold sound.

Spaces assumed stable,
labeled by nameplates,
anchored by personal belongings.

In rurality, office spaces are provisional.

They are shared.

Doubled.

Borrowed between meetings.

Cleared temporarily so care can happen at all.

[Load Point: Borrowed Privacy]

What happens when there is nowhere else to go?

The superintendent shares her office.
Once a week, it is surrendered for four uninterrupted hours
to provide a crisis counseling clinic.

This week's desk accumulation moved to another pile.
A habit in our district—
when the need shifts, we pile elsewhere.

Nothing about this arrangement is inefficient.
It is precise.
Intentional.
Quietly urgent.

Confidentiality is required—
ethically, legally, relationally.
But the building does not contain enough places
where privacy can be guaranteed.

Care waits for space to be vacated.
Meetings are displaced.
Work migrates elsewhere.

Privacy here is not built.
It is negotiated.

It arrives through rearrangement—
who can leave,
who can share,
who can be interrupted,
and who cannot.

Crisis care does not pause for construction timelines
or capital plans.
It happens here. Now.

The superintendent encounters offices not as authority,
but as availability—
responsible for ensuring someone, somewhere
can close a door when it matters most.

Confidentiality is held only as long as someone else can be displaced.

Transportation

Distance, Dependence, and the Cost of Movement

Routes drawn on maps—
calculated for efficiency,
rendered as thin lines
across winding roads,
switchbacks, bridges, and gravel spurs,
with travel times that register as distance
when winter arrives.

Some students ride an hour each way.

Morning and night.

Dark to dark.

In cities, transportation is treated as a service—
a neutral conveyance between home and school.

In rural practice, buses become moving rooms.

Bus families form without assignment.

Older students care for littles.

They remind. They steady. They intervene.

Leadership emerges quietly here—

often unnamed,

definitely unmeasured,

but practiced daily

in narrow aisles and shared time.

The most important rule is simple:

stay in your seat.

Framed as safety—

it is.

But it is also an expectation of care.

A life-affirming act.

A collective agreement that everyone arrives intact.

Routes move bodies; relationships keep them riding.

[Load Point: Cost of Service]

Who pays when care costs?

Transportation in rural districts carries no redundancy.

Missed buses mean no school.

Many families lack reliable vehicles.

There is no ride share.
No backup system.
No late bell that holds.

Vehicles function as invisible governors of vitality—
regulating who is able to participate
in the culture that happens beyond the schedule.

Every extension of the day extends the route.

Each requires another run—
another driver,
another hour,
another calculation.

Transportation becomes one of the district's highest costs
not because of inefficiency,
but because inclusion moves.

Roads are narrow and unforgiving.
Ice formed in shadows.
Trees falling without notice.
Assholes who pass red lights flashing.
Are all part of the equation.

Community members with turn-around space
become essential partners—
their driveways quietly extending
district infrastructure.

Insurance presentations warn against driving students
in personal vehicles.
The language is precise.
The liability clear.

The room listens politely.
Silently refusing.

Everyone knows what this rule constrains:
belonging beyond the school day.
Sports teams.
Clubs.
Community gatherings.
The medicine for rural isolation.

Transportation here is not logistics.
It is vitality regulated by distance,
by cost,
by who can move
and when.

The superintendent encounters transportation as load—
routes that must hold,
drivers who are not readily replaced,
decisions that determine
which forms of participation remain possible
and which quietly disappear.

When movement fails,
nothing else can begin.

Transportation sets the outer limits of participation.

Restrooms

(Dignity, Privacy, and Policy Made Flesh)

Bathrooms rarely appear in leadership documents.
They do not show up in strategic plans,
graduate profiles,
or vision statements.

Here, bodies encounter rules most directly—
about gender, safety, control, cleanliness, surveillance.

What happens in these rooms
often cannot be said elsewhere.

The superintendent inherits these tensions
through policy, complaint, and silence.

[Load Point: Bathrooms]

Who is made to disappear just to be?

Bathrooms are where policy touches bodies
without abstraction.

They are designed for efficiency—
fixtures aligned,
sightlines managed,
movement regulated.

No configuration resolves dignity without trust.

In this building, bathrooms are where students disappear briefly
to breathe,
to cry,
to hide,
to regulate what classrooms cannot hold.

They are also where care concentrates.

Students gather here not only to avoid class,
but to tend to one another—
to sit together on cold tile,
to talk someone through panic,
to absorb each other's overwhelm.

This is one of the school's greatest strengths—
and also one of its greatest strains.
Care clusters.
So does risk.

Bathrooms become sites of flocking and co-dependency—
places where students carry one another
when the rest of the system cannot.

They are where frustration releases sideways.
Where horseplay turns destructive.
Where vandalism registers as pressure, not defiance.

They are where vaping happens—
not because students are careless,
but because these are the spaces
where surveillance briefly thins.

Phones are hidden here as well—
not only to avoid detection,
but to remain tethered
to people and networks

beyond the boundaries of school.

Technology is added.

Detectors installed.

Logs accumulate.

Patterns watched.

Alerts sent.

Behavior shifts.

Not away—

but inward.

From collective spaces to single stalls.

From visible to concealed.

From shared to isolated.

The system learns to track signals.

Rarely reducing the needs
that produce them.

The superintendent does not often enter these spaces.

She encounters them indirectly—

through incident reports,

parent emails, and maintenance requests

A door removed.

A stall broken.

A carved slur.

Each arrives framed as a problem to be solved.

Rarely as a question to be held.

When concerns surface—about vaping, vandalism, safety, identity—
the system reaches for regulation.

Doors propped open.

Sign-in sheets.

Adults stationed nearby.

The logic is familiar:

order produces safety.

But bodies do not experience order equally.

For some students, the bathroom is the only place
where they can exist without immediate evaluation.

For others, it is the most dangerous room in the building.

The superintendent holds this contradiction
without a clean solution.

Managing bathrooms consumes
time and attention—
meetings, monitoring plans, emails, repairs—
always at the cost of something else.

Every decision redistributes risk.

Add a lock, and someone feels trapped.
Remove a door, and someone feels exposed.
Do nothing; harm circulates.

There is no neutral configuration.

Bathrooms reveal what infrastructure tries to conceal:
that dignity cannot be standardized,
that safety is not evenly distributed,
that care—left without support—becomes strain.

When students linger here,
the question is not just why,
but what the rest of the building
has failed to provide.

When conflict erupts,
it is rarely about the space—
but about pressure
with nowhere else to go.

The superintendent learns to read bathrooms
as early warning systems—
not of misconduct,
but of unmet need.

Bathrooms teach this lesson clearly:
You cannot design dignity without relationship.
You cannot regulate safety without listening.
You cannot surveil care into existence.

The blueprint accounts for
square footage, plumbing lines,
points of entry and exit.

It does not show fear.
It does not register the cost of being seen—
or of becoming invisible.

The superintendent carries that remainder.

Bathrooms are not marginal space.
They are diagnostic.

They show how policy behaves
when it meets the body
without buffer.

Infrastructure teaches dignity long before language does.

Water Pipes

Failure, Redundancy, and the Weight of Continuity

Water infrastructure rarely appears in leadership documents.
It is assumed—
trusted to move without attention.

In this community, every storm tests that assumption—
against years of deferred maintenance
calcified inside buried systems.

New leaks surface.

Pressure drops.

Notices circulate.

We hope for boil notices,
not outages.

A vision for schools as hubs of community;
I did not yet know how literal that becomes.

When water fails, the school shifts function.
Resilience hub—

not by designation,
but by necessity.

[Load Point: Water Without Backup]

What becomes of a place when it cannot keep itself alive?

One winter, water ran dry for eight straight days.
Coordination began immediately—
emergency county services,
water donations and delivery routes,
communications rewritten daily.

The pipes remain compromised.
School continues.

Porta-potties lined the grounds.
Kindergartners love them—
as long as there are night lights.
Middle school bathroom antics all but disappeared.

So many new protocols.
Temporary restaurant status.
Fire watch.
Buckets where fountains once stood.

Always a way, always a code;
survival is administratively regulated.

Water carries no pause button.
There is no assessment window for sanitation.
Meals cannot be postponed indefinitely.
Bodies cannot be abstracted.

The superintendent encounters water as constraint—
what must be held together
while archaic systems fail.
Care becomes logistics.
Trust operational.

When water disappears,
school does not close—
It reorganizes.

The work is not innovation.
It is endurance—
finding continuity inside restriction.

There are unexpected outcomes.
Community trust thickens.
People learn we can provide.
The maintenance director, a water witcher,
meets his wish to dig a well.
Redundancy is built.

Since then—
no major outages.

The irony remains:
stability arrives only after navigating
every regulation required to prepare for system failure.

With redundancy,
water pipes hide themselves again—
assumed,
trusted,
Unremarked.

*Continuity and care are carried here—
until they leak into the land.*

Grounds / Land

Enclosure, Stewardship, and the Refusal of Containment

Grounds are mapped with boundaries.
Flood zones.
Liability maps.
Areas to be supervised, secured, maintained.

Grounds are counted in acres and board footage—
mowed, striped, drained, inspected.

They are classified as assets.

They are managed.

In practice, grounds are where institutional responsibility presses at the edge.

Fences appear.

One to contain preschoolers who love the hill beyond their classroom—
bodies learning gravity,
safety preceding autonomy.

One around the developing production garden—
not to exclude community,
but to protect what will be eaten:
keep dogs out and deer at bay,
soil uncontaminated
so nourishment moves straight from field to table.

One securing the elementary perimeter—
to manage entry,
to hold young elopers still learning how to school,
to favor instruction over desires.

These fences are not symbolic.

They are expensive.

They are debated.

They are built slowly,
with grant timelines, procurement rules, and public explanation.

They answer real needs.

They also reveal the tensions of enclosure.

Fences mark liability, not responsibility.

[Load Point: Stewardship Without Ownership]

Who stays with what they cannot claim?

Grounds hold the daily balance between safety and belonging.

Should community members be allowed to walk the track during the school day?

One answer says no—
school is in session,
visibility is risk,
control equals care.

Another answer says yes—
this land gathers,
presence deters harm,
shared use deepens safety rather than eroding it.

Both logics operate simultaneously.
Neither resolves the other.

Here, the superintendent becomes infrastructure—
absorbing the mismatch between systems designed for space
and lives lived as place.

No map shows where her responsibility ends.

At the edge of enclosure,
where boundaries fail to hold,
other ways of holding responsibility become legible.

Indigenous philosophies frame Land as relation,
a living presence to which responsibility is owed,
not as resource or backdrop or ownership claimed.
Land is not silent.

It is listened to.

It does not belong to the institution.

The institution arrives briefly,
borrows space,
leaves scars.

Feminist thought echoes:

questioning enclosure,
challenging mastery,
insisting care is relational rather than extractive.

Safety is not achieved through domination,
but through attentiveness, proximity, and shared responsibility.

These traditions understand: Land is not managed.
It is responded to. It interrupts.

Institutional grounds require consent to enter.
Land does not.

Land holds memory without permission.
It predates fencing.
It exceeds policy.
It persists through closure, consolidation, renovation, renaming.

The school cannot fully enact this ethic.
It operates inside systems that require boundaries,
signage,
locks,
lines.

And still—
Community members gather at dusk.
Food grows beyond intention.
The hill keeps calling.

In rural districts, accountability fails
not because responsibility is absent,
but because it operates spatially.

Buildings are not neutral support.
They are load-bearing realities—
Here, no fence, floor plan, or policy line
can contain the flows of care, attention, or need.

The superintendent carries these limits,
absorbing systemic strain,
carrying what other systems have released,
She stabilizes failure long enough
for something else to grow.

But infrastructure cannot grieve.
We can only transfer load.

Land is where systems meet that which does not consent to containment.

A flag arrives. Not ours to place. Not ours to announce. Tribal Council chooses the wall, the location, the height. It is smaller than the American flag. No formal recognition at games, assemblies, or ceremonies. It hangs quietly, present, legible only to those who notice. A small act of institutional naming.

Decisions deferred. Space ceded. Words shaped. Guidance honored. Authority redistributed. Partnership held.

When does a fence protect what grows, and when does it prevent it?

Interlude: Matters that Breathe

There is no longer a stable place from which to stand outside the world.

This is not a philosophical claim; it is a material one. Contemporary physics has reached the limits of separation—between observer and observed, matter and meaning, system and participant (Barad, 2007). Measurement no longer reveals a pre-existing reality; it joins one. The universe does not unfold independently of attention. It responds.

Matter listens.

This does not mean consciousness is everywhere in the human sense. Relation precedes object; interaction precedes isolation. What exists does so in entanglement, not autonomy (Barad, 2007). Cause and effect are not linear tracks but overlapping fields—recursive, delayed, disproportionate; small disturbances travel, large interventions dissipate (Frank, 2025). Nothing happens only where it is intended.

Biology has never required the fiction of distance (Haraway, 2016).

Forests do not operate as collections of individuals. They persist as networks—rooted, fungal, vascular—where survival depends on responsiveness rather than control (Simard, 2021). Resources move toward stress. Memory is stored underground. Care circulates through contact, not command. No single organism oversees the whole. Intelligence is distributed, emergent, patient (Hutchins, 1995).

Growth, in these systems, is not vertical.

It is lateral.

Subterranean.

Accretive (Gumbs, 2020).

Breakdown is not failure. It is transformation.

What holds these systems together is not efficiency but reciprocity across time. What matters is not speed but continuity. What lasts is what can adapt without severing relation.

This is not metaphor. It is mechanism.

When leadership imagines itself as external—directing from above, correcting from outside—it misunderstands the system it inhabits (Kirby, 2011). When accountability presumes linear causality, singular responsibility, or extractable outcomes, it mistakes complexity for error. When care is treated as an intervention rather than a condition, it arrives too late.

In entangled systems, responsibility does not disappear.

It multiplies.

Agency is not centralized. It is distributed across human and more-than-human actors, infrastructures, histories, and flows. Action is never singular. It is always already shaped by what has come before and what will remain after—by inherited conditions that constrain and enable possibility (Dixon-Roman, 2021). Accountability, in such a world, cannot be confined to attribution or proof. It becomes a question of attunement: what are we amplifying, what are we interrupting, what are we sustaining without naming?

Emergence names this quality of change—the way patterns form through repeated local interactions rather than top-down design. Nothing is imposed whole. Everything becomes through relationship. Strategy, in this sense, is not a plan but a listening practice: iterative, responsive, collective (brown, 2017). The future is not predicted. It is grown.

Listening this way: relinquishing mastery,
staying with uncertainty long enough for signal to appear,

accepting that care does not scale cleanly, that repair is uneven,
that outcomes can rarely be stabilized.

Schools, like forests, are not neutral containers. They are living assemblages—of bodies,
buildings, policies, land, water, memory. They absorb what passes through them. They return
what is repeated. They metabolize values whether or not those values are spoken.

There is no outside from which to manage this.

Only participation.

Only responsiveness.

Only the slow work of staying in relation.

What follows moves further into this condition—

Not toward abstraction, but toward density.

Not upward, but downward.

Not toward control, but toward forms of care capable of surviving entanglement.

Count-in:

Let the tempo decompose.

3, 1, 2, 4

Consensus, consensual, consent:

con—together; sentire—to feel.

To breathe together.

Track 5: Living Infrastructure

Superintendent as Mycelial Tangle(r)

*"I want to go downwards
I want to be ground
I want to be fed on
I want to break down
I want to be soil"*
(Sheldrake, Soil, 2020)

This track does not conclude the dissertation.
It exposes what has been growing underneath.

What came before—
policy, archive, grief, infrastructure—
does not resolve.
It is composting.

The superintendent does not arrive here as endpoint.
She arrives as node, entangled—
in relations she did not design,
learning she did not plan,
curriculum she did not intend to teach.

This track is not linear.
It spreads.

*Time begins here differently—
folded, recursive, carrying residue
forward and backward
at once.*

Tangle(r)



Threads do not converge.
They spread.

What was once held
begins to loosen—
not released,
but shared.

Light no longer gathers
at a single point.
It moves laterally,
unevenly,
branching.

Responsibility does not end—
it shifts.

Not upward.
Not inward.
Outward.

At the edges, connections multiply.
No single thread carries the weight.
Load disperses.
Care circulates.

Knots loosen into pathways.
Pathways thicken into ground.
Ground holds.

Objects, ideas—material and alive—
no longer forming a body,
but a field
of relation.

Nothing central.
Nothing final.

Only continuation.

The work persists,
not as burden,
but as movement.

Threads pass through many hands.
Meaning is carried, not contained.

Responsibility is shared—
unevenly,
imperfectly,
alive.



fades into relation—
and still,
care reverberates.

Grief (decomposer)

Grief threads through it all—
insistent, agentic, alive.
Not something to be solved or sidestepped,
but a force that reorganizes, transforms, and fertilizes.

In ecological systems, decomposition is not failure—
it is the mechanism by which matter is made available again.

It moves through systems not as breakdown,
but as pressure—
revealing where care has been deferred...
where infrastructure has thinned,
where responsibility has pooled without recognition.

Grief does not arrive cleanly.
It accumulates.
It teaches.

Grief, held differently

Some stories do not belong in this text.

Nearly a quarter of our students have experienced the death of a primary caregiver.
Those losses are not mine to narrate.
They are not data points to be analyzed,
nor testimonies to be rendered legible for scholarship.

And still, they shape everything.

Grief moves through the school not as disclosure,
but as weather—
altering energy, attention, rhythm.

It settles into hallways.
It lingers in absences.
It changes what can be asked of a day.

Here, the Land holds what language does not.
Trees outlast explanation.
Rivers carry memory without requiring articulation.

Social Physics, Unsettling

Sociology once imagined itself as physics. Auguste Comte named it *social physics*—
a search for invariant laws, a desire to govern society as one might govern motion.

Social life, in this framing, was treated like matter: observable, predictable, subject to force.
The task was to discover the laws
and bring order to the system.

But power, even in physics, is not a thing.

It is a rate of transfer.

$$P = \frac{E}{t} = F \cdot \frac{d}{t} = F \cdot v$$

Power is energy gained or lost over time.
It is movement.
It is direction.
Velocity through constraint.

Power is not what exists.
It is what moves.

Power, inherited

Power is defined as accumulation—
the speed at which resources and knowledge are converted into value.

Power becomes possession made efficient;

$$P = V \cdot I$$

the speed at which difference is crossed,
the rate at which potential is exhausted.
Accountability, the mechanism that verifies the transfer.

This logic travels through institutions as: achievement, standardization, optimization—
a dispositif that teaches us to become what we are worth
rather than who we are becoming.

In this condition, we are rendered as laboring bodies.
Quantified.
Classified.
Sorted.

Not makers of worlds
but units of output.

Institutions as closed circuits

Social institutions are not neutral structures.
They are circuits—
designed pathways through which power flows.
They wire certain ways of knowing, privilege particular standards, normalize dominant logics.
They teach by repetition.
They discipline through friction.

From the center, resistance is registered as deficit.

At the edges of the circuit, flow weakens—
not because nothing is there,
but because the system cannot see it as such.

Resistance, refigured

Energy becomes perceptible where movement meets potential.

Resistance is not absence.
It is work.

$$W = F \cdot d$$

Work exists only where force meets resistance,
where movement must stay in contact long enough
to change something.

It introduces variation into the circuit.
It slows flow. It makes energy visible.

In rural spaces,
what is seen—
is and must be carried.

Who carries the charge

In living systems, energy does not travel evenly.

It follows paths of least refusal,
densifying where connection already exists and pooling where movement slows.

Charge is not chosen.
It is inherited through relation.

Where attention lingers, pressure arrives.

This is not failure of design—
It is its consequence.

A different physics

Power moves.
It does not accumulate without cost; it circulates or it burns.

Accountability emerges as response—
who notices,
who stays,
who absorbs what cannot be deferred.

Resistance teaches through contact. It redirects flow.
It makes consequence visible.

Care is how systems survive their own design—
absorbing load,
dissipating heat,

$$P_{loss} = I^2 \cdot R$$

preventing collapse,
without the fiction of neutrality.

Schooling, relational thinning, and attrition

Flattening does not happen all at once.
It happens through alignment.

Through schedules that repeat without responding.
Through standards that travel without translating.
Through demands to demonstrate learning in forms that cannot hold.

Over time, relation thins.
Creation is deferred.
Agency is delayed.
Participation becomes conditional.

People learn to comply not because they believe,
but because resistance costs too much to sustain alone.

Loneliness does not arrive as feeling.
It settles as structure.
Not emotional, but ontological.

A world where connection is permitted only when it can be measured.
Where difference must justify itself to remain visible.

Ideology thrives here—
not as extremism,
but as routine.

What begins as abstraction accumulates as exhaustion.
What appears neutral rearranges who must carry the weight.

$$W = \int P(t) d(t)$$

What remains is not the moment of force,
but the accumulation work over time.
Sediment.
Residue.
Legacy carried forward.

Mycelial motion

To live well inside these systems requires shape-shifting—
moving between roles, times, and identities.

It requires rhizomatic movement:
between past and future,
policy and practice,
institution and land.

Not linear progress. But spread.

And still—

We are pandemic.
We are uprooted.
We are lonely.

And—

we are not finished.

We are also resistance.
We are care that circulates.
We are beginnings that do not announce themselves.

Not solutions.
But shoots.

Breaking concrete.
Carrying charge sideways.
Reconfiguring the field.

Care That Circulates

When systems fail—
who decides what care becomes?
Licensed counseling positions sit empty for over a year—
Not for lack of need
but because micro-repair will never meet macro-loss.

Meanwhile, our Community Transformation Coordinators
practice care through connection rather than containment.

Certified through trust and demonstrated relational capacity,
they uncover hidden community assets,
link students to leadership,
and learning to problems that matter beyond school walls.

Gardening, construction, culinary, media, business, electronics—
no longer simulations,
but responses.

As the garden becomes the heart of our learning,
energy circulates differently—

and the long-empty middle school begins to animate:
a resource center.
a teen space.
a weight room.
a community kitchen.
a makerspace.
This is grief work.

These ideas do not originate in one place.
They flow—
between conversations,
between partners,
between need and possibility.

The work is not to hold them all,
but to let them circulate.
Grief composts; in doing so, life takes root again.

Some days the movement is heavy. Some days it stalls.
We allow for ebb and flow.

This, too, is care.

Not fixing grief.
Not resolving loss.
But refusing to let it isolate.

Networks do not choose what they carry.
Mycelia move nutrients—
and also toxins.

Harm circulates, too,
through the same channels as care.

The question is not whether systems tangle,
but what they're asked to metabolize—
who decides
what gets composted
and what gets contained.

Infrastructure (as curriculum)

Infrastructure is not content,
but pedagogy by condition.

Teaching through constraint,
exposure,
rhythm,
interruption—

Students, families, and staff, together,
we are learning—constantly—
what matters,
who is responsible,
and what can be expected
from the world we inhabit.

Buildings are not neutral support.
They are load-bearing realities.
Time schedules.
Water holds and fails.
Food appears and disappears.
Safety circulates unevenly.

This is an operating curriculum—
largely unchosen,
rarely named,
always instructive.

When the Center Fails

A point—defined as that which has no part.
Countable.
Replaceable.
Another data point mistaken as person.

A line followed—length without breadth, progress without thickness.
←Privilege routed upward. Despair routed down. Nothing touching→

The ends of the line were fixed.
↔Anchored in time. Anchored in space. History flattened into sequence.→

Surfaces appeared—
planes that promised universality.
Reduced to dimension,

all things behave the same.

Edges expand | Not outward, but over | Through enclosure | Through control.

Boundaries followed—
extremities named,
disciplined.

Deviation measured,
fixed,
returned toward an average that pretends to be neutral.

Figures emerge,
each contained,
each legible only against a background of sameness.

The circle perfected the illusion.

Everything routes toward the center.
Power stabilizes here.
Knowledge flows inward.
Difference skims the edges.

We stand at the center
studying what is already decided
as marginal.

Abstraction does the work of distance.
Quantification does the work of disappearance.

The average becomes the standard.
Meeting the standard at all costs.

And still—the math holds.



But living systems do not behave this way.

They do not begin at points.

They do not move in straight lines.

They do not converge cleanly.

They do not obey the fantasy of center.

They spread.

They tangle.

They thicken.

They move through soil,
through memory,
through relation.

No unit stands alone.

No number tells the whole story.

What appears as noise is often life refusing compression.

What appears as deviation is vitality.

There is no center—only proximity.

There is no boundary—only zones of contact.

No figure contained—only relations that shift
as soon as you try to hold them.

This exceeds geometry.

It is ecology.

Beyond measurement,
toward attunement.

Past abstraction,
into responsibility
without center.

The river, remembered forward

In our town imagining meeting,
an idea surfaces—
and resonates.

A community river clean-up—
not new,
but buried.

Entwined with
a paddleboard or kayak race—
not invented,
but reimagined.

Breathing life back into possibility.

It carries the energy often associated
with the old community pool—
shared joy,
ordinary,
collective.

As other needs pressed forward—
housing, water, safety—
the idea is set aside,
never dismissed.

The river remains.

The superintendent's work, here,
is not to decide *when* such ideas happen,
but to keep them possible—

Protecting time for students
to imagine and design,
reminding partners why joy belongs
alongside urgency,

holding space for what feels wrong to prioritize
but may matter most.

The past breathes this way—
not through conservation,
but through tending.

We gather what remains.
We fold what returns.

The pool building leans,
wood soft, roof missing,
but laughter lingers.

Composting, yes—
but not only decay.
Seeds, stories, footsteps, echoes—
all feed what might come.

Hands in soil.
Hands in water.
Hands in conversation,
in memory,
in future.

When something becomes impossible, what responsibility remains?

The river waits.
We paddle forward,
sideways, folding, refolding—
joyful, curious, carefull,
possibile.

Legacy (vibrations)

Legacy—

not what is preserved.
what persists through repetition.

It lives in routines,
in deferred maintenance,
in bell schedules and boarded doors,
in what continues long after intention has moved on.

Legacy does not ask permission.
It hums.

Accountability (Rippling)

Accountability does not arrive as a line to follow.
It does not march.
It ripples.

It moves through hallways, pools in corners,
settles into walls, water, and time.

Its logics are legible.
It recognizes how power flows, how space shapes responsibility.

And still—it asks:

- what if response-ability is not an outcome, but a questrain?
- what if data is composted, mixed with care, presence, and context, until something else takes root?

It threads through rooms.
It bends around bodies,
It sways with absence,
Attention,
And
Presence alike.

*Accountability meanders—
 asking to be felt,
 to be traced,
 to be made vital in the spaces it inhabits,
as the rhythm moves through.*

Learning (in Place)

This is scholarship grown through garden beds,
basketball bleachers,
and shared meals.

This is thinking that smells like petrichor.
This is leadership with dirt under its nails.

I come to understand this movement as fugue-like—
not in its classical discipline,
but in its insistence on multiplicity:
themes entering at different moments,
carried across bodies, policies, places,
never fully synchronized,
never fully alone.

To tangle is not to confuse.
It is to stay entangled.

The superintendent (recomposed)

The superintendent does not arrive here as endpoint.
She arrives as node, entangled—
in relations she did not design,
learning she did not plan,
curriculum she did not intend to teach.

She is not an architect or engineer.
She is part of a living network—
feeding and being fed,
breaking down and being transformed.

Her work is not scalable.
It is not transferable without loss.
It is learned only in place,
with others,
over time.

As superintendent, I am assumed to sit atop a hierarchy.
But the truth of the work is far less vertical.

I am a tangler of hierarchies.
Gathering decisions, not from above,
but from beside—
from custodians,
social media,
riverbanks,
archival whispers,
community loss,
and the complex web of familial caretaking.

Leadership becomes an act of composting:
decomposing inherited structures
and nourishing interdependent ones.

There is no clean chain of command here—
only counterpoint and polyphony,
only mycelial reach.

Place (In Time)

Place does not operate on institutional time.
It lives in time—uneven, responsive, consequential.

Being on time means meeting deadlines, submitting reports, aligning expenditures to
procurement cycles that assume distance between decision and impact.

Being in time means responding when something is ready to move—when people, land, and
possibility align—whether or not the system has caught up.

I am late on a report.

Not because the work has stalled, but because it has been moving: meeting with partners,
designing a pathway, building the relational infrastructure required for what policy terms
innovation.

The work does not pause while the systems rehearse readiness.

Today, another call with the State as part of a pilot project, designed—at least rhetorically—to
help the system learn how to support innovative approaches to Career and Technical Education.
The language is flexibility. Responsiveness. Learning alongside districts.

The tempo is not.

The conversation returns, again, to procurement timelines.

To budget documents revisited for additional rationale. To assurances required before permission can be granted.

Each person names another part of the system where movement slows—another office, another process, another constraint.

This is not a failure of individuals. It is a temporal mismatch.

The system speaks innovation while remaining bound to a rhythm that cannot move without authorization. What is being piloted is not the work itself, but the system's capacity to recognize work already underway.

Meanwhile, we proceed.

Our aim, a rural pathway program—one that treats students as present contributors to economic and community vitality.

Designing. Repairing. Feeding. Organizing.

Work that matters now, in this place.

Whether or not the state arrives in time to support it, the work continues.

Place does not wait for approval. Community does not pause for alignment.

This is the tension of leadership in living systems: remaining accountable to timelines that measure readiness, while staying in time with what is already asking to be built.

Some reports will be late.

The work, never so.

Time cycles here, youth move within, carrying past and future together. Ninth graders label the school: objects, actions, hallways, classrooms. Each placard bears a Siuslaw word, a picture, a QR code with pronunciation. The alphabet hangs. Language revitalizes hallways. The project lingers in memory, in possibility, in the imagination of new connections to come.

The ESD Native Youth Wellness program leads culinary students in foraging, salmon preparation, crabbing. Summer arrives, carrying a Tribal/Shared History theme. Each moment situates learning in cycles, in relation, in bodies engaged with land and water. Pilot projects, yes. Sustainable continuations, not yet.

Tribal Council names a priority: government-to-government relations regarding a windmill proposal along the coast. Senior political science students attend the meeting. They take notes,

follow procedure, witness and practice advocacy. The meeting is one-time. The experience reverberates: where will it ripple?

Sideways, through reflection, through conversation, through questions yet unasked. Learning does not end. It folds back, folds forward, travels through bodies, soil, and memory.

Labels hang. Pronunciations heard. Salmon prepared. Crabs gathered. Meetings attended. Questions raised. Knowledge folds, refolded.

Futures imagine(d).

Cycles of learning persist alongside gaps, interruptions, and unsustained projects. Capacity, attention, and possibility are not the same. Knowledge moves recursively—through QR codes, ceremonial food, political action, and memory. Presence builds through past and possibility—partial, imperfect, yet carried forward.

Systems (In Motion)

Systems are not abstract structures.
They are people-in-motion—
carrying logics through meetings, documents, timelines, and bodies.

Design has physics.
It moves weight.
It determines where pressure settles
and who must absorb it when alignment fails.

From a distance, systems appear coherent.
Flow charts hold. Processes resolve.
Innovation is named.

Closer to the ground, coherence thins.

What works in place does not translate cleanly. It must be flattened to travel—reduced to categories, timelines, rationales that can survive handoff.
In that translation, the work loses texture. The relational labor disappears.
What remains is form without force.

This is not because the system is broken.
It is because it is designed to move differently from life.

When codification arrives, the body feels it first.

A tightening in the chest as another meeting loops back to procurement.
The jaw setting while explaining—again—why something already in motion still requires permission.

The fatigue of holding momentum while waiting for clearance that may never come.

The system does not experience this as strain.
Bodies do.

Each delay redistributes responsibility.
Each requirement asks someone, somewhere, to hold the work in suspension—
 keeping relationships warm,
 keeping students engaged,
 keeping possibility alive—
 long enough—
 for authorization to arrive.

This is how systems survive their own limits:
through people willing to carry what the design cannot.

Bodies near the soil ask different questions.

What if systems were designed
to arrive closer to the ground—
to move at the speed of trust rather than approval,
to learn from motion already underway
rather than requiring its translation?

What if innovation meant attunement,
not exception?

What if the system stopped asking: *Can you justify this?*
but instead,
wondered,
What is already working, and how do we stay with it?
These are not technical questions.
They are temporal ones.
Ethical ones.
Embodied ones.

Systems will continue to move.
The question is not whether they change,
but who must contort in the meantime.

A literal tangling (calendar, service, professional learning)

One visible strand of this mycelial work appears in something as ordinary as school calendars.

Five districts—

all small, rural,

all on four-day school weeks—

align their teacher work days.

Not because policy requires it.

Not because funding depends on it.

But because isolation is instructional.

In small rural schools, teachers rarely experience alignment as it is imagined elsewhere.

There is no grade-level team down the hall.

No content-alike department to lean into.

A third-grade teacher teaches alone.

A high school teacher carries five preps—

sometimes more—

each requiring different materials, pacing, affect.

Professional learning, when designed for scale,

often arrives already misaligned—

assuming abundance of staff,

assuming redundancy,

assuming time that does not exist.

So the calendars shift.

Across districts, days open simultaneously.

Time is made porous.

Through our education service district,

teachers gather—not as representatives of a single building,

but as a dispersed network—

third-grade teachers finally meeting other third-grade teachers,

science teachers talking across schools,
specialists finding one another after years of working alone.

Learning does not move downward here.
It moves sideways.

Ideas travel between classrooms,
between buildings,
between districts.

Learning walks emerge—
first within schools,
then across them.

Teachers step into one another's rooms.
Not to evaluate.
Not to replicate.
But to notice.

Practice thickens through exposure.
Language develops.
Confidence circulates.

What grows is not uniformity,
but relation.

Each district remains distinct.
Each community intact.
No one is absorbed.
No one is centralized.

The ESD does not stand outside the network.
It runs between—
absorbing pressure, redistributing nutrients,
keeping districts alive long enough
to do their own growing.

This is not a system imposed from above.
It is infrastructure grown from beneath—
a living network formed through timing, trust, and proximity.

It is mycelial.

Not scalable without loss.
Not transferable without translation.
But deeply responsive to place.

And this, too, is curriculum.

Teachers are learning—
what collaboration can feel like
when it is no longer compensatory,
no longer solitary,
no longer imagined only for others.

They are learning
what becomes possible
when responsibility disperses,
when care circulates,
when no single node carries the weight alone.

Care / Affection (Hyphae)

Care, here, is no longer metric.
It is relational.
It is ecological.
It tends toward vitality—
allowing community to breathe, together.

It is response-ability without exit.

Affection is not incidental to this work.
It is what makes it costly.

Not sentiment.

Not warmth.

But attachment that exceeds role—
that refuses professional distance
when distance would be safer.

Affection does not scale.

It binds.

And binding is what allows grief
to change shape—
not to disappear,
but to become shareable,
speakable,
held by more than one body.

To care in this way
is to accept vulnerability
as part of leadership.
To be affected
without guarantee of repair.
To stay connected
even when staying hurts.

*Affection is not opposed to professionalism.
It is opposed to indifference.*

Hi-Hat

At our most recent professional learning day,
each educator is asked to fill out a phone-a-friend card.

Nothing formal.

Just names.

Numbers.

A way to stay connected
after the room empties.

One of the superintendents completes their card, too.

Six names,
six districts—
Six titles.

Not official titles.

Not roles recognized by policy or contract.

Titles that name how we show up for one another:

who steadies,
who notices,
who makes space,
who holds humor when the work grows heavy.

The card is shared, appreciation and affection, too.

Dr. Budget Balancer, Captain Crisis Manager, Mr. Jack-of-all-Trades,

Mrs. Public Relations, State Report Wrangler—

our rural friend collaborative—

All send love.

We joke later—gently, truthfully—

about how we are sometimes better
at sharing joy and care over text
than face to face.

Not because the affection isn't there—

but because this work trains us
to keep things moving,
to stay composed,
to carry quietly.

And still—the joy circulates.

We laugh a lot together.

We tease.

(I am reminded of that first Tribal Council meeting.)

We send encouragement mid-crisis.

When the role threatens to flatten us,
we remind one another who we are—
that we are never alone.

This, too, is infrastructure.

Not a system.

Not a mandate.

But a living network
that names strength,
shares weight,
and lets care travel
in ordinary ways—
through professional communications
sent at just the right moment.

Becoming (Runners)

Across all of this,
the superintendent is revealed not as singular actor
but as relational root system—
at times node,
at times internode,
at times simply soil.

Each role—

Instrument of State and Soil,
Archive,
Relational Node,
Infrastructure/Place-Maker,

Mycelial Tangle(r)—
recursive, not discrete.

They bud and branch into each other,
recomposing what leadership might mean
in a place like this.

This work was not crafted to conclude,
but instead
to send out runners.

These ideas—this composted ground—
do not stay fixed.

They travel.

Sideways.

Crosswise.

Often, underground.

The shoots will not resemble the seeds.

You, reader, are now part of this ecology.

As you carry these texts into your own corridors—
classrooms or council meetings,
playgrounds or policy briefs—
new buds will form.

An idea lodged.

A question that won't go quiet.

A practice held differently.

These are not conclusions.

They are latent sprouts.

*This is not a map of what is.
It is a field
of what might yet become.*

Outro: Let the **beat** *drop*

Accountability does not arrive as closure.

It arrives as attunement—
a shift in rhythm you can no longer unhear.

Once the beat is felt,
once time is no longer abstract,
neutrality loses its count.

There is no count-in left.

The beat has already dropped.

Whether you keep time,
step back,
or introduce a hesitation—
the tempo adjusts.

Silence still carries weight.
Non-action still moves the sound.
Sometimes, it lets something else count, too.

This is not an invitation to change the beat.
It is an acknowledgment
that your listening already has.

There is no downbeat to return to.
Only a count we now share.

The work continues—
layered, uneven, unfinished—
not because it is resolved,
but because it cannot be unheard.

The count is taken on land that remembers longer than we do.

Final Coda: Accountability Across Registers

Policy, Practice, and Translation

This coda brings together three translational artifacts that illustrate how accountability might circulate differently across state, district, and community contexts under Oregon's 2025 Education Accountability Act (SB 141). These materials are not presented as findings of the dissertation, nor as a comprehensive policy proposal. Rather, they function as examples of how the superintendent role must move continuously between relational, place-based work and state-level accountability systems.

In rural superintendency, translation is not ancillary work; it is survival. The documents that follow are not supplements to the dissertation's argument—they are evidence of how that argument operates under institutional constraint. These accounts represent one register among many—an attempt to work *as cyborg* within this assemblage—inhabiting institutional form, procedural language, and state logics while remaining accountable to land, relationship, and lived consequence.

In practice, I would invite Tribal Council members and/or their delegates to participate in the process proposed below. We have begun this work informally—reaching out to Tribal Council members when planning curriculum or land use decisions. Under this model, that relationship could be formalized: Tribal delegates participating in accountability visits, co-constructing district goals, and reviewing/approving annual reports. This is not consultation; it is co-governance. This is not represented in the speculative documents that follow—not because it is less important, but because it requires direct negotiation and consent that cannot be presumed in a dissertation. What I offer here is a structural opening; what Tribal nations choose to do with it remains theirs to determine.

The first account is a policy memo and schematic proposing an alignment of accountability responsibilities across districts, Education Service District (ESD) Student Investment Account (SIA) liaisons, and state leadership. This account adopts a procedural, state-legible register to demonstrate how narrative accountability might be relocated from districts to regional and state roles without diminishing legislative understanding. As Oregon defines a revised accountability model, there is an opportunity for the system to recognize and cultivate its own mycelial capacities—the lateral networks and relational infrastructures already functioning beneath its hierarchical surface. While any codified structure necessarily abstracts lived complexity, defining accountability as relational process rather than fixed outcome preserves the possibility of keeping it responsive and organic.

The second account includes multi-register district communications—a board report and a public-facing invitation—illustrating how accountability can be enacted locally when narrative reporting is conducted through state-led observation rather than district self-report. These artifacts show how governance, community participation, and transparency shift in tone and posture under such an arrangement.

The third account is a speculative ESD SIA liaison report, presented in slide format as such reports are typically delivered to state agencies. It is not a real report but a plausible one—grounded in my experience as both superintendent and former ESD liaison—designed to show how observation-based narrative might function in practice. This account is intentionally provisional and state-facing, emphasizing pattern recognition, contextual conditions, and open questions rather than evaluation or summative judgment.

The dissertation itself employs a polyphonic, musical structure to explore accountability as a lived, relational, and temporal practice—one that resists full stabilization. This final coda deliberately adopts a different register: calm, procedural, and state-legible. The contrast is

intentional. Together, these translational artifacts demonstrate the ethical and interpretive labor of translation that educational leaders routinely perform—moving between lived complexity and statutory clarity without assuming that either fully contains the other.

Translation A:

Policy Memo: Aligning Accountability, Administrative Burden Reduction, and Narrative Integrity under SB 141

To:

Oregon Department of Education Leadership
Legislative Committees on Education

From:

[Superintendent / District]
(in collaboration with Education Service District partners)

Re:

Leveraging ESD SIA Liaisons for State-Led Narrative Accountability under the 2025 Education Accountability Act

Date: 1/1/2026

Purpose

This memo proposes an accountability design alignment that advances the intent of the 2025 Education Accountability Act (SB 141) by reducing administrative burden on districts while strengthening the state's capacity to answer legislative questions about the impact of Student Investment Account (SIA) investments.

The recommendation builds directly on ODE's Accountability Implementation Action Plan (June 2025), particularly its emphasis on *shared responsibility, streamlined reporting, public transparency, and regional partnership*.

Policy Context

SB 141 establishes an expanded accountability system grounded in:

- shared responsibility across ODE, ESDs, districts, and partners,
- streamlined reporting and grant consolidation,
- and improved legislative oversight tied to student outcome

ODE's Accountability Implementation Action Plan operationalizes this intent through four workstreams, including:

- **Workstream #1: District Performance & Continuum of Supports**, and

- **Workstream #3: Streamlined Reports & Grant Consolidation**, explicitly aimed at reducing redundant district reporting while improving coherence and decision-making

As narrative reporting requirements are reduced under SB 141 and related implementation efforts, a key design question emerges:

How can the state reduce district burden without thinning the public and legislative account of how SIA investments function in practice?

Problem Statement

Under current practice, districts are responsible for:

- implementing SIA-funded work (instruction, student leadership, wraparound supports),
- reporting quantitative performance metrics required by statute,
- and repeatedly narrating complex, integrated work for state accountability.

SB 141 appropriately reduces duplicative narrative requirements on districts. However, absent a reallocation of narrative accountability labor, this reduction risks diminishing the quality of legislative understanding, particularly for relational, place-based work that does not translate cleanly through metrics alone.

Recommendation

Reassign responsibility for district-level narrative accountability to Education Service District (ESD) SIA Liaisons, with ODE program specialists serving as thematic supports and legislative translators.

This approach leverages existing roles already identified in ODE's accountability ecosystem and aligns with the agency's stated intent to strengthen internal and regional capacity rather than increase district workload.

Roles and Responsibilities

1. Education Service District (ESD) SIA Liaisons

Role: Regional accountability witnesses and narrative authors

Responsibilities:

- Conduct regular site visits to districts within their service area.
- Observe SIA-funded work in context (instructional practice, student leadership, wraparound supports).

- Hold cross-district relational knowledge, enabling contextual comparison.
- Produce standardized narrative accountability reports grounded in observation and dialogue.

Policy Alignment:

- ESDs are explicitly named as partners in Oregon’s accountability system under SB 141.
 - The Implementation Action Plan emphasizes regional coordination and partnership as central to effective accountability.
-

2. ODE Program Specialists

Role: Thematic experts and legislative translators

Responsibilities:

- Support ESD liaisons when specific policy or investment questions arise (e.g., how particular SIA uses relate to attendance, graduation, or student well-being).
- Synthesize regional findings into statewide thematic insights.
- Serve as the liaison between ESD-authored reports and legislative reporting requirements.

Policy Alignment:

- SB 141 assigns ODE responsibility for annual legislative reporting and performance reviews of districts.
 - The Implementation Action Plan identifies internal alignment and cross-office coordination as necessary to fulfill these responsibilities effectively.
-

3. Legislature

Role: Recipient of state-authored accountability narratives

Receives:

- Narrative reports written by the state (via ESD and ODE collaboration), not self-reported by districts.
- Contextualized comparison across districts and regions.
- Grounded accounts that complement required quantitative metrics.

Policy Alignment:

- SB 141 requires ODE to submit annual reports to the Legislature that include district performance reviews and progress toward growth targets.

- This proposal strengthens the evidentiary base of those reports without increasing district reporting requirements.
-

Rationale

Improves Accountability Quality

Narratives authored by regional liaisons who directly observe district work reduce performative inflation and improve accuracy, consistency, and nuance—supporting the Legislature’s oversight role more effectively than self-reported narratives.

Preserves District Capacity

By relocating narrative labor to ESD and ODE roles, districts remain focused on implementing SIA-funded work rather than translating it repeatedly into state-facing narratives—directly advancing SB 141’s administrative burden reduction goals.

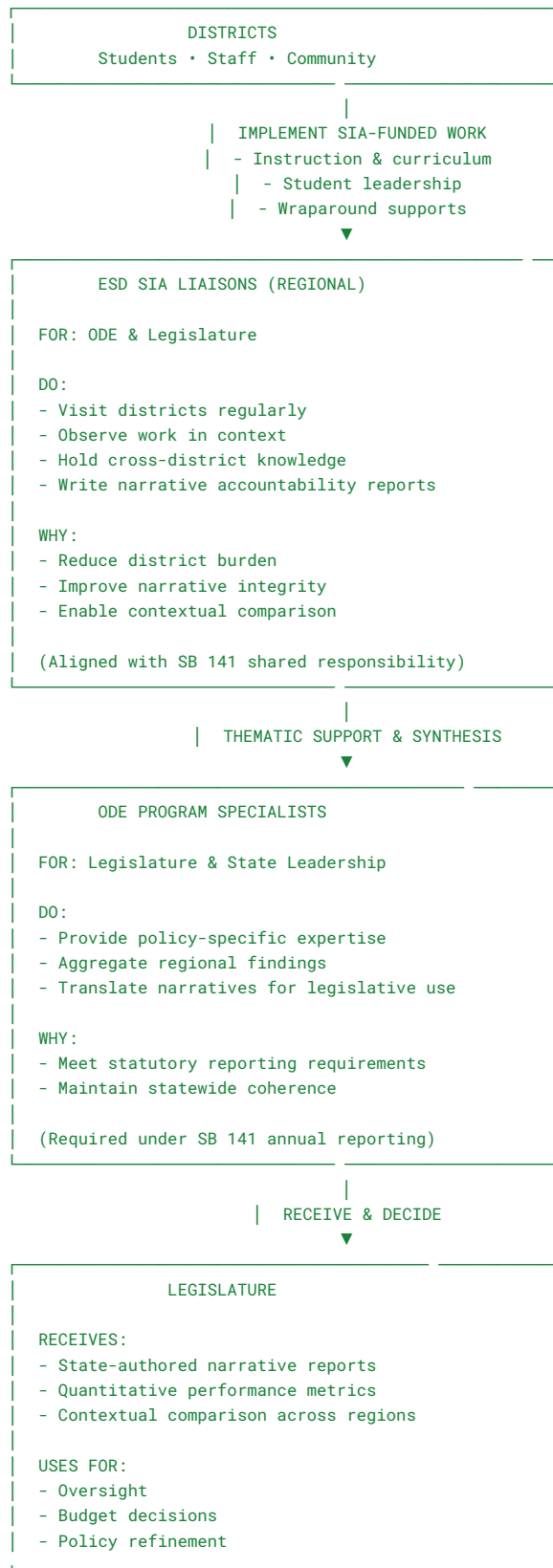
Supports Meaningful Comparison

Because ESD liaisons serve multiple districts, comparison emerges through shared witnessing conditions rather than standardized self-description—aligning with the Implementation Action Plan’s emphasis on coherence over redundancy.

Conclusion

Reducing administrative burden should not require reducing understanding. SB 141 and ODE’s Accountability Implementation Action Plan already point toward a system of shared responsibility and streamlined reporting. By formally assigning narrative accountability to ESD SIA Liaisons—supported by ODE specialists—the state can meet legislative accountability needs while protecting district capacity to do the work investments are intended to support.

ONE-PAGE SCHEMATIC: Accountability Flow under SB 141



Translation B:

Community Invitation: Participating in a State Accountability Visit

Understanding Our Schools

ESD Student Investment Account Accountability Visit

[District Name] will soon host a visit from our Education Service District (ESD) SIA Liaison as part of the state's effort to understand learning, student leadership, and community-connected supports in action.

Community Members Are Invited to Participate:

-  Join informal conversations about programs and supports
-  Welcome the liaison into shared spaces
-  Share your perspective on what's working and what needs attention

Visit Details:

-  Date: [Date]
-  Open Community Window: [Time Frame]
-  Participation is voluntary and informal
-  This is not an evaluation or a formal review

Learning Together, Beyond the Numbers.

For more information, contact: [Contact Name] | [Phone Number] | [Email Address]



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Upcoming State Accountability Visit Focused on Early Literacy and Attendance Initiatives

[City, OR] — [Date] — [REDACTED] School District will soon host a visit from its Education Service District (ESD) Liaison as part of Oregon's evolving approach to education accountability.

Rather than relying solely on written reports, the state is spending time in districts to better understand how SIA-funded efforts—such as classroom learning, student leadership, and community-connected supports—are operating in daily practice. The visit emphasizes observation, dialogue, and shared learning.

“This approach allows the state to see how investments are working on the ground,” said Superintendent [REDACTED]. “It shifts accountability from explanation to presence, and the report informs both the legislature and our district accreditation process.”

Community members are invited to take part during the visit by joining informal conversations, welcoming the liaison into shared spaces, and offering perspective on what is working well, what is evolving, and what still needs care.

The visit is not an evaluation and does not require preparation or performance. Participation is optional and informal.

Community members interested in participating should call [REDACTED] or attend the open community window on **[date/time]**.

This visit reflects a broader effort by the state to understand public education not only through metrics, but through lived experience and local context.

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Translation C:

Speculative ESD Liaison Accountability Board Report

The following slides are a speculative illustration of how narrative accountability might be authored by an ESD SIA Liaison through observation and dialogue. They are not evaluative findings and do not represent an actual district report.

Visit Context & Purpose



ESD Education Accountability Visit

Purpose of Visit

- To observe how state funded priority initiatives are operating in daily practice, with particular attention to:
 - early literacy,
 - attendance and engagement,
 - and community-connected supports.

Method

- Classroom and shared-space observation
- Informal conversations with students, staff, families and partners
- Attention to how initiatives intersect rather than operate in isolation



District-Level Observations 1/3

Observed Patterns & Conditions



Emerging Patterns

- Early literacy efforts were visible across multiple settings and routines rather than confined to a single program or intervention.
- Attendance supports framed by staff and students as practices of return and belonging. *Emphasis was placed on relationship, follow-up, and flexibility rather than comp.*
- Student leadership surfaced as connective tissue—linking classroom learning, community projects, and peer support. Leadership roles were described as



Conditions Supporting This Work

- Cross-role collaboration (instructional, support, administrative)
- Consistent adult presence
- Use of shared spaces that blurred traditional boundaries between school and community

ESD Liaison Board Report Submission

Regional Learning Note

Insights from this speculative ESD Liaison account are also informing regional professional learning conversations facilitated through the ESD. Observed patterns related to early literacy coherence, attendance as a practice of return, and student leadership as connective work are shaping upcoming cross-district learning walks and shared professional learning opportunities. These regional spaces are designed to support districts in learning with and from one another, allowing practices to circulate horizontally rather than be replicated through directive models. This approach reinforces accountability as collective learning rather than individual comparison.

Regional–State Collaboration Questions

At our upcoming collaborative meeting, regional ESD liaisons (including myself) will be discussing how observations from recent accountability visits can inform statewide learning. Questions under consideration include how to surface patterns across districts without reducing them to rankings, how to better reflect relational conditions—such as belonging, continuity, and return—alongside traditional outcome measures, and how state support can prioritize sustaining the conditions that enable this work rather than scaling individual programs. These conversations will help shape how regional insights are translated for state leadership and legislative understanding.

Counterpoint: A Rhizomatic Curriculum Vitae

(Pedagogical Template)

“any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.”

(Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987, p. 7)

Name:

Preferred Name:

Meaning(s)/Tensions:

Place:

Connection to Land:

Values:

Vision:

Core Beliefs:

Questions that make me think:

People, events, ideas that I would like to learn more about:

Six-word description of me:

Snippets of autobiography as *currere*:

Using the below protocol include a personal philosophy statement in any format you wish.

Potential Examples: [What I've Learned](#) (from *Esquire*) and [This I Believe](#) (from NPR)

- 1) Regressive: Identify a personal learning experience (interaction with a person or group, literature/media, custom/tradition, art or oral recitation, major event or crises, sensational memory (smell, taste, sound). Describe for clarity and honesty in order “to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present.” (Pinar, 1975, p. 1)
- 2) Progressive: Through description, “the past becomes and the present is revealed...the future as one sees it, full of goals and fears and dreams, “influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present.” (p. 2) Attend to emotional, rational response to remembering this lived experience. Generate a list of questions, thoughts, ideas this brings up in you.

- 3) Analytic: The “complex, multi-dimensional interrelations” (p.3) between past and future are analyzed, in order to create a more clear picture of the self in the present.
- 4) Synthesize: Perhaps through some of the questions below, and perhaps through totally new ideas/connections, one makes deeper sense of their point of view and worldview. How have your ways of being, knowing, and making sense of the world been clarified or challenged by this reflexive protocol? How might this clarity or these new questions drive new learning/actions?

Subsistence

Self Care Commitments and Practices:

Physical (eat, move, rest), Emotional/Psychological (self expression outlets), Social (healthy connections with others), Spiritual (beliefs and practices)

Protection

In what areas of your life do you seek order and certainty? How do you navigate the stress that comes during times where you cannot control, predict, know?

In what areas of your life do you enjoy ambiguity, change, and chaos? How do you navigate the stress that comes during times that are overstructured by others?

Is it our duty to follow laws? Whose responsibility is it to change an unjust rule/law? What is your ethical framework?

Understanding

How do you make sense of the world? What are you curious about? What subject matter(s) do you enjoy learning about? What is worth knowing/learning? In what areas are you expert, how do you know? Where does knowledge come from? How do you show your knowledge/understanding? What is your educational experience? What is the purpose/value of education? What are knowledge, understanding, wisdom; how are they the same/different?

Who do you look to for guidance? What are your favorite modes of learning? In what ways do you feel understood/misunderstood? In what ways do you seek understanding with those who think/know/act different from you? What is truth? How do you define and measure personal success? What does it mean to be a good human? How are you growing/becoming a good human?

Affection

Where (and with whom?) do you feel the strongest sense of belonging? How do you define healthy relationships? How do you show connection/affection with family/friends/partners/acquaintances/strangers/nature? Who do you seek connection with? To what groups (family, friends, work/social/community groups, learning/interest communities, teams, religious/spiritual groups, romantic relationships)? In what ways do you prefer people show approval, connection, love? Who reminds you who you are and your purpose in life? When do you feel lonely? When do you feel the need to disconnect? What is love?

Leisure

What do you do for fun? How do you recharge? What are your privacy needs? How do you spend your free time? What makes you laugh? What is play? What do you dream/daydream about? What are your desires, what makes you happy? What are your fears/what scares you?

Creation:

What are you passionate about? What projects sustain you? What do you do when you are bored? How do you define creative? Do you identify as an artist? How do you communicate, express, share your emotions, ideas, beliefs? What good ideas have you made better? What is beauty? Do your creations lean towards order or disorder? How do your creations connect to nature, culture, economy, etc? What inspires your creativity?

Participation:

How do you meaningfully contribute to your family, community, society, world? What challenges/problems inspire you towards action? What is justice? In what ways do your creations aim to pass on current knowledge and ways of being, question/shift the way things are, envision a different future, connect people from different cultures? What is your purpose or calling? How does your work align with your passion/interests? What do you choose to do outside of your work? What are your values and personal ethics and how do they impact your decision making?

Identity:

Who are you? What does it mean to be who you are? How do you define/describe yourself to others? How do others describe you? What are the tensions between how others see you and how you really are? What are your roles and responsibilities in society? In what ways does

your identity (appearance, thoughts, values, behaviors, habits, language, customs, religion, work) align/not align to social norms? What are the consequences of this alignment/misalignment? What parts of your identity give you earned or unearned esteem (power, respect, social acceptance) in your communities? What accomplishments give you recognition, status, dominance, prestige in your communities? What makes you unique, important, worthy? Where does your self-esteem come from? What experiences impact your self-esteem? How does your past shape your present and your future?

Freedom:

What is your purpose in life? How do you measure significance, impact? What do you want your legacy to be? To what degree do you have autonomy over your life? How do power and oppression impact you? What is the history of resistance and liberation in your life? What is democracy?

Appendix: Sample AI Prompts and Guardrails for Use

This dissertation was my first foray into generative AI. As noted in the liner notes, AI as research apparatus operated as diffractive thought partner—helping me identify patterns and contour language in support of attunement and staying with tensions.

What follows are sample prompts that may be instructive, alongside reflection on some of the guardrails I used and learned in an effort to minimize harm.

1.

Most often, I would write reflections as vignettes—summaries of recent discussions, streams of consciousness about leadership and accountability, or a word that had led me somewhere unexpected (*questrains*, *citations as excitations*, and so on)—and paste them into the chat with the prompt:

"Thoughts and connections to or drifts from current structure?"

or the related:

"Are there themes here that layer well onto current ideas, or new concepts that deserve their own section?"

Most of the time, I let the responses deepen my thinking before writing—either at the beginning of a new section or when layering a new idea into a later draft. Sometimes I captured a response and added it to my own notes to be uploaded in a future prompt. Over time, I recognized this as a useful process for tracing thought and feeling across the various

dimensions of superintendency. It became a practice of attunement.

2.

When beginning a new section, I would upload portions of my own writing—prior works, reflective pieces, creative attempts not yet ready for inclusion—and ask:

"Using only my uploaded writings and the current outline/draft, please provide a backbone lyrical outline for Track 1 Fugue entrance of Board voice that matches my written rhythm, cadence, and language—one I can use to layer in contextual specifics, questrains, and so on."

I tend to write in a *not that, this* format, which shows itself—perhaps in overabundance—throughout this work. My drafts also lean on fragments and ellipses, which opened themselves to recognizable reorientation when reframed by generative AI. My thinking was present in the resulting lyrics, but new ideas and examples would seep in. Sometimes this simply provided space for revision and editing within an existing rhythmic cadence. Sometimes it offered new language—and thus new concepts—to play with. Often it resulted in complete discard.

This process of distribution, diffraction, discard co-composed the dissertation, the knowledge, rural superintendency, and me.

3.

Often I had a structural idea in mind—file folders as part of the archive in Track 3, for instance—but couldn't quite find how to shape it in ways that reinforced the concepts while holding a commitment to enactment over explanation. A prompt to orient that structure:

"I'm working to add a file folder structure in Track 3 that expands and synthesizes the code language from my prior writing (uploaded). Please recommend an outline structure with titles and topics that will help me identify contexts that fit each section."

Later, once I had an expanded outline with draft notes under each section, I queried:

"Does this outline provide an arc that best supports a reader to experience the concepts and questions previously described?"

The response would describe the arc of my current writing, offer alignment to the larger arc of the work, and highlight strengths and possible areas for consideration. A major part of this writing process was ordering and layering structure—attempting coherence without moving into explanation.

4.

My primary goal in this dissertation was to enact the thoughts and theories that inspired me throughout graduate school. To that end, I would paste or upload segments of my writing and ask:

"Which thinkers does this section seem to be in conversation with?"

Often, they were the thinkers I was aiming for. Sometimes the response offered new names to read and connect. Some were rabbit trails leading me in unwanted directions. Others became portals to similarly aligned works—new questions, new concepts, new framings arriving sideways. Either way, the response was less answer than orientation.

Guardrails

1. Community-centered confidentiality

Never, ever, upload identifiable student, staff, or community information. This goes beyond names and ages to include vignette writing. I would often ask myself: would our community know exactly who I was referencing?

2. Opacity as methodological practice

I worked hard to write at a distance in order to protect individuals and found that the backbone lyrics provided an additional separation to then layer distanced specificity. This became a process for refusal of extractive stories.

In many instances the generative reframing of language provided a useful layer of opacity—allowing conceptual patterns to surface while protecting the specificity of lived relationships.

3. Cross-platform comparison

While I did pay for a professional upgrade for a generative AI platform, over time, I found that I preferred free versions. Using multiple platforms allowed me to better recognize biases and gaps and seemed to lessen the flattery and sycophancy built into AI models. Another helpful prompt addition built into multiple prompts, “Please provide critical, objective feedback without the pleasantries.” This process became a form of algorithmic triangulation: using platform variation to surface what any single model obscures. I do not enter the same prompts into each platform, but rather shift usage between platforms as I seek critical feedback and recommendations for thoughtful layering.

4. Prompt minimization

Free versions are limited and will tell you how many prompts remain in a session. I found that reminder useful for pacing — a built-in nudge toward restraint. In the same way I try to limit water usage and carbon footprint in electronics, I've landed on minimizing prompts rather than avoiding AI use entirely. Readers should consider their own impacts and make conscious decisions accordingly. One recommendation is to research the environmental impacts of a single prompt, graphics development (I have chosen not to ask AI to create images after seeing the quality of those included in my only attempt

(Translations) and learning the significant increased energy usage compared to text-based prompts.

5. Place-based accountability

AI served as apparatus in the writing process, but this did not happen in isolation. This work is grounded in four years of rural superintendency, seven years of graduate school, and a lifetime of experience and learning. I regularly returned to local conversations, policy work, and community relationships to ground emerging language and concepts—refusing to let AI responses shape interpretation in place of lived proximity.

Sample Library

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