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Oregon School Activities Association Launches S.T.A.R. Initiative to Disrupt Racism and Combat Discrimination at Oregon High School Athletic Events

WILSONVILLE, ORE. — This Fall, the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) has launched S.T.A.R., a new initiative that provides a model for racial equity awareness, action, and resources on how to prepare for, educate and interrupt discriminatory behaviors occurring during high school sporting events. Standing for Safety, Tolerance, Acceptance and Respect, the S.T.A.R. initiative provides training and resources to help schools become more equity minded in events they host and eradicate discriminatory behaviors safely and respectfully.

“S.T.A.R. provides our athletic directors and coaches with tools to navigate discriminatory incidents that occur and puts a structure in place to support their actions,” said Peter Weber, OSAA executive director. “We believe this program is going to set the bar for non-discrimination in Oregon high school sports and activities.”

S.T.A.R. evolved in answer to Oregon House Bill (HB) 3409, which was passed and placed into effect in the fall of 2019 following years of incidents of cultural, racial and ethnic transgressions during state high school events. Sponsored by Oregon State Rep. Janelle Bynum, House Speaker Tina Kotek and House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner, HB 3409 stated that school districts can’t be members of an interscholastic association unless that body has a process to sanction discriminatory behavior at events.

“We fought for HB 3409 because we believe that awareness and education will lead to the eradication of racial transgressions during high school events,” said Rep. Bynum. “With the S.T.A.R. program, OSAA has developed a positive and supportive way to put HB 3409 into practice within the four walls of a school and on every field, course and court.”

OSAA worked collaboratively with a number of state entities—including the Oregon Department of Education, the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators, the Oregon School Boards Association and the Oregon Association of Student Councils—as well as students, educators, and administrators on how to respond, create an action plan and move forward with the requirements of HB 3409.

“All students deserve the ability to compete in interscholastic events without feeling discriminated against or fearful of how we will be treated at an event,” said Yosalin Arenas, a 2021 graduate of South Medford High School. “I’m hopeful that S.T.A.R. will help combat the racism and discrimination that students like myself have faced in the past.”

Starting this fall, OSAA is running S.T.A.R.-themed pregame announcements at high school athletic events that proclaim “Greatness Is Hateless.” These announcements encourage a positive focus on the student competitors and brand S.T.A.R. behavior on and off the field by positioning hateful, intimidating, and bullying behavior by anyone, including athletes, parents and community members, as completely unacceptable.

“S.T.A.R. is doing its part to reverse the trend of divisive behaviors seen in the outside world,” said KT Emerson, OSAA assistant executive director. “Respect for difference is mandatory, awareness of it is a virtue and appreciation for it is success. We are striving for success for our students throughout all Oregon schools.”

Becoming an Official S.T.A.R. School

The S.T.A.R. initiative is focused on helping schools create a safe, welcoming, and validating environment by specifically disrupting racism and combating discrimination so every student can thrive. Each Oregon school will have the opportunity to opt in as an official S.T.A.R. school. The OSAA, affiliated organizations and its membership want the program to grow, evolve and develop over time, and the program will incentivize schools and communities to do more through a tiered structure that allows schools the flexibility to introduce S.T.A.R. into their communities and a framework where communities can set goals for the future. The system includes blue, silver and bronze levels during year 2 of implementation of S.T.A.R.

As part of the S.T.A.R. guidelines, schools are encouraged to post signage to help visiting participants and spectators know where facilities are and how to navigate an event; read a required S.T.A.R. public address at each OSAA-sanctioned event; and conduct a preseason meeting with student-athletes, coaches and parents to review the S.T.A.R. sportsmanship standards.

MEDIA NOTE: For more information about S.T.A.R., photos, logos and videos, visit www.osaa.org/equity/star-resources.

About OSAA

The Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) is a nonprofit, board-governed organization composed of its member schools, both private and public. OSAA is dedicated to ensuring equitable competition for Oregon high school students through OSAA-sponsored events. The foundation for that goal lies in a belief that no school, team, or individual should be treated as any more or less than another. OSAA standardized rules of eligibility and competition and put in place a standard of education regarding participation in interscholastic activities. Administered equally and fairly, OSAA policies strive to allow no one school to outweigh its brethren. OSAA.org

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