



Don Christman

Assistant Superintendent

Lockwood School District #26

Lockwood, Montana, USA



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Oct. 3 – Oct. 19, 2022

Learn directly from Don what inspired him to apply for the Board of Directors.

[Watch the video.](#) [Read the transcript.](#)

Biographical Information:

Don Christman is an Assistant Superintendent who ensures the effective implementation of educational programming and policy related to individuals with disabilities and provides leadership in addressing issues of education for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities through local, state, and national activities. This includes work to support the Special Education Legislative Summit as a state representative, volunteering as a member of the Montana Delegate Assembly, and as a member of the Council of Administrators of Special Education Policy and Legislative Committee.

In addition to directing special education programming, Christman oversees federal programs and focuses on reducing food scarcity and improving access to medical care for students and families in the community he serves.

Prior to joining the staff of Lockwood School District, Christman served as Principal of elementary schools on the Northern Cheyenne and Tohono O’odham Reservations in Montana and Arizona and as a special education teacher in school districts across the Northwest. Christman also served as an adjunct professor at City University of Seattle in the special education administration program.

Christman graduated from City University of Seattle with a master’s in special education administration and in educational leadership. He received a bachelor’s degree from Eastern Montana College. He holds certification as both supervisor and director of special education, principal EK - 12, and is certified as an EK -12 special education and a K – 8 regular education teacher.

Candidate Statements:

What makes CEC’s mission meaningful to you? (Limit 150 words)

My advocacy through volunteer service with CASE for appropriate governmental policies, professional standards, and the quest for continual professional development has consistently placed CEC at the forefront of my research. Participation as a member of the CEC Board of Directors and the mission that drives it offers the opportunity to raise questions, voice concerns, and provide direct input to school leaders, both local and national, who help influence policy and program decisions. The CEC has helped parents gain greater insight into the education of students with exceptionalities.

The great benefit of engaging with and supporting the mission of the CEC is the ability to address the needs of individual students while participating in the big picture that impacts students with exceptionalities across our nation.

Provide three specific examples of how your leadership experiences, including professional and volunteer, have had an impact on fostering change or moving an organization/entity forward. (Limit 300 words)

As part of the CASE Policy and Legislative Committee, I coauthored this year's position paper on MTSS. This experience of collaborating with colleagues from across the nation, editing professional writing in real time and addressing critical issues with those who are working beside me is phenomenal. Recently I was asked by CEC Executive Director, Chad Rummel, to represent the state of Montana as the Special Education Legislative Delegate team leader. This has increased my outreach and contact with special education directors who work in outlying rural areas but have voices that need to be heard. Finally, after serving on the School Administrators of Montana Delegate Assembly Steering Committee, I will be representing the state of Montana as the SELS state representative in Washington DC in July 2023.

Describe an idea you have to help CEC achieve one of the strategic plan goals, and explain how your knowledge, skills, and expertise will be applied to this idea. (Limit 250 words)

I feel that culture as a school, a district, a state, and a nation is perceptible in many ways—how visitors are greeted, the artwork on the walls, and the languages heard in the hallways and classrooms. The conversations at the meeting table and the messages shared with our political leaders all can support an effective and diverse workspace of special education professionals.

Implementing effective HR policies and practices is essential for increasing the diversity of the educator workforce, but it is only a beginning. To foster real change, a commitment to diversity must be embedded in our national outreach.

From preparation, recruitment, and hiring to welcoming and mentoring, everyone has a role in creating a community that values diversity, encourages educators to learn from one another, ties the school to the community, and fosters teacher retention.

Instead of looking for a quick fix or temporary solution, I would suggest that we take a close look at organizations with successful diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. How often do they revisit their recruitment practices to ensure that all processes are evolving with the changing needs of their specific organization? How can this be developed into a fluid and relevant platform for the CEC? While it's true that recruitment is only one small part of a greater diversification strategy, it serves a critical function and should be prioritized.

Ultimately, diversity is inseparable from community. We're all in it together.

What methods do you suggest would assist CEC to recruit more diverse members into volunteer and leadership positions, especially within units and divisions? (Limit 250 words)

I believe in actively using diversity recruiting and intentionally seeking out volunteer and employment candidates who represent many different sociocultural backgrounds and identities. This also means taking steps to make the recruiting and onboarding processes more equitable and fair by removing or mitigating the effects of unconscious bias or other systemic barriers.

Diversity recruiting also means sourcing and engaging volunteers of differing intellectual and physical abilities, genders, sexual orientations, religions, class backgrounds, nationalities, and social standings. I

currently use this practice in engaging young adults who are struggling to secure employment in our community due to various factors and have had repeated success in integrating diverse individuals into our school and community.

It must be understood that diversity hiring isn't about fixing one stage, and it isn't just about the vetting process. When you talk about diversity and inclusion, it leads to the more holistic area of belonging in an organization and it doesn't just end with a recruiter

Professional Position and Education:

Primary Professional Position:

Assistant Superintendent
Lockwood School District #26
Lockwood, MT

Highest Degree:

M. Ed. Special Education and Educational Leadership, City University, 1998

CEC Membership Information:

Years of CEC Membership: 10 years

Division Membership(s):

Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)
Montana Council of Administrators of Special Education (MCASE)

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