



SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2025

**EMPOWERING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS
FOR THE SUCCESS OF EVERY STUDENT**

This semi-annual report highlights the incredible work and progress across SSDA from July through December 2025.

INCREASED MEMBERSHIP

SSDA membership remains strong and grew even more this year! We're grateful for the support of our members and proud of the valuable resources and services we've been able to provide in return.



Here is our
membership
data, shown in
comparison to
last year.

Membership	2025-2026	2024-2025
County Office of Education	37	30
School District	430	350
Associate Members	62	57



As part of SSDA membership this year, districts also became members of the National Rural Education Association (NREA), strengthening our collective voice at the national level.

SSDA'S FIRST PUBLICATION: LEADING SMALLS, THINKING BIG



In just six months, the SSDA team wrote, edited, and published this book, drawing on insights from 100 superintendents at the 2025 Small School Superintendency Retreat. It now serves as a practical learning guide for new small and rural district superintendents!

“ I wanted to thank you for the *Leading Smalls - Thinking Big* book. That is a well thought out book that every new small school Superintendent should get when they start their job. From a County Superintendent ”

IN-PERSON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2025 Small School Superintendency Retreat

Our 2025 Retreat brought together 100 superintendents to share insights on leading small and rural districts, blending learning, connection, and fun.

The retreat also launched the Elevat-Ed Forum, supporting 19 new superintendents for the 2025-2026 school year!



5

FIVE E3 FORUMS IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS!

Topics Included:

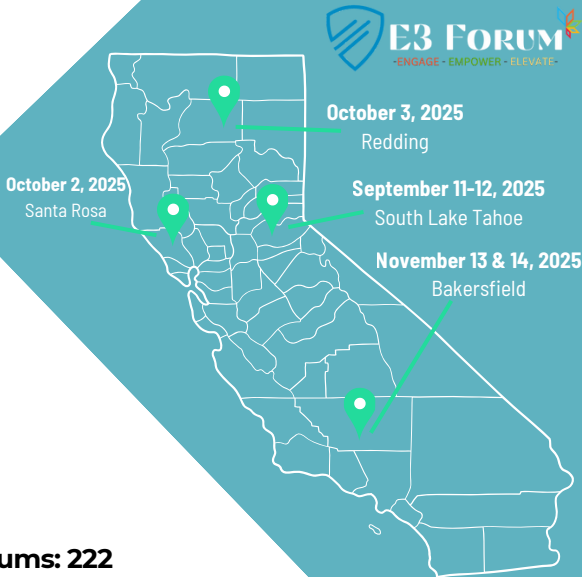
- The Business of Education
- Governance & the Importance of Vision
- Instruction
- Navigating Facilities Funding for Small and Rural Schools
- Navigating Charter School Authorization and Oversight

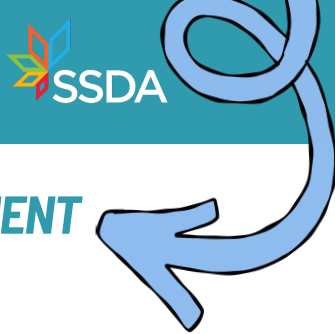
Total attendance across the five E3 Forums: 222

These forums provided meaningful professional development for small and rural school district teams, ensuring districts have the resources they need to succeed.

Each E3 Forum was also offered virtually via webcast, allowing members outside the region to participate from anywhere.

Join Us for Additional E3 Forums in January 2026 – San Diego & Imperial County





VIRTUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2 Webinars

- **Setting the Standard for Excellence with Ron Berger**
 - Ron Berger is a renowned author & Chief Academic Officer of EL Education
- **Centering Indigenous Voice with Maggie Peters**
 - Maggie Peters is the Native American Studies Model Curriculum Learning Specialist at Humboldt County Office of Education

2nd Annual Governance Series

- Exciting, expanded training opportunities for board members of small and rural school districts!
 - Three sessions held so far, covering topics such as:
 - Student-Centered Governance
 - The Importance of Vision
 - Creating Synergy between the Board President & Superintendent

As part of this year’s governance series, the training is split into two parts, and all attendees receive their FPSC ethics certificate upon completion.



NEW DISCOUNTED MEMBER SERVICES

Board Policy Program

SSDA officially launched its board policy program, creating 66 board policies. SSDA drafted the policies and then customized them to meet your district’s needs, offering this service at a heavily discounted rate for members.

TWO school districts have already officially adopted our board policies:



Trona
Joint Unified School District



36 DISTRICTS ARE LINED UP FOR SSDA'S BOARD POLICY PROGRAM!

Proposition 2 Five-Year Facilities Master Plan Program

SSDA partnered with Edapt Schools to develop a powerful new service that simplifies the process of applying for Proposition 2 funding. This initiative provides small and rural school district leaders with a cost-effective and efficient way to develop a 5-Year Facilities Master Plan that meets OPSC compliance requirements.

14 DISTRICTS HAVE SIGNED UP AND ARE CURRENTLY PROGRESSING THROUGH THE PROGRAM!

FIRST-EVER SPI CANDIDATE FORUM



In October, SSDA hosted its first-ever candidate forum for those running for State Superintendent of Public Instruction, featuring Al Muratsuchi, Nichelle Henderson, Josh Newman, and Anthony Rendon. Sonja Shaw and Richard Barrera also submitted videos highlighting their campaigns and explaining how they plan to support small and rural schools. Louise Simson, Superintendent of Mark Twain Union School District, served as the forum’s moderator and did a fantastic job.

You can watch the full recording on our website at ssda.org!

SSDA SOUNDWAVE PODCAST

We officially launched our podcast and recorded a wide range of episodes! Four are available now, so be sure to listen on YouTube or Spotify. We’ve also created a few episodes highlighting our monthly newsletters, so you can catch up even if you don’t have time to read them.



VICTORY FOR RURAL EDUCATION

The Secure Rural Schools Act passed in the U.S. House securing funding for over 700 rural counties, including 39 in California. This major bipartisan win was achieved through tireless advocacy by **Jaime Green** and **Sheree Beans** of Trinity Alps Unified School District, **Heidi Torix** of Eastern Sierra Unified School District, NREA Executive Director **Dr. Melissa Sadorf**, **Bode Gower**, **Eric Bonnicksen** of Placerville Union School District



Morgan Nugent of Fall River Joint Unified School District, Assemblymember **Heather Hadwick**, **Dr. Bill Chapman**, President-Elect of NREA, **Sean Rickert**, President of the Arizona Rural Schools Association, and finally the **FFA students** from across the country, who traveled to D.C. to share their stories and highlight the impact the legislation would have on them.



SSDA ADVOCATES FOR SAFE DRINKING WATER IN RURAL SCHOOLS

SSDA recently convened a meeting with representatives from the California Water Boards, giving rural districts an opportunity to share the challenges of relying on well water or trucked water for their schools. The Water Boards were represented by Board Member Sean Maguire, Deputy Director Joe Karkoski, and Supervising Water Resource Control Engineer Mehreen Siddiqui.

We are grateful to our **SSDA Safe and Reliable Drinking Water for All Students Taskforce** for their dedication, collaboration, and willingness to share their stories to help advocate for rural districts.

We also want to acknowledge Dr. Patrick Keeley for leading this vital work on behalf of California's small and rural schools, which face similar challenges regarding safe drinking water for students.

SSDA MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN THE TASK FORCE:

- **PATRICK KEELEY, ED.D., MOUNTAIN EMPIRE USD**
- **JACOB MANN, MOUNTAIN EMPIRE USD**
- **DR. RAUL RAMIREZ, MESA UNION SD**
- **MIKE HEFFNER, BONNY DOON SD**
- **MELANIE MATTA, HOPE ELEMENTARY SD**
- **MARK BEEBE, GEYSERVILLE USD**
- **JASON LISH, GEYSERVILLE USD**
- **CINDY COSTELLO, SONORA UNION HIGH SD**
- **ROB HUDSON, ED.D., DUCOR UNION ELEMENTARY SD**
- **CLINT JOHNSON, NEW HOPE ELEMENTARY SD**
- **BEN HOWELL, ED.D., SUMMERVILLE ELEMENTARY SD**
- **LINDA MAYFIELD, MARIPOSA COUNTY UNIFIED SD**
- **JENNIFER ALLEN, DI GIORGIO ELEMENTARY SD**
- **CINDY GIST, SUNDALE ELEMENTARY SD**

PERSONALIZED BOARD WORKSHOPS



Located in Mendocino County



Located in Modoc County

SSDA Executive Director **Yuri Calderon** with **Eric Bonniksen**, Superintendent of Placerville Union School District, Immediate Past President of SSDA led two personalized board workshops for Willits Unified School District and Tulelake Basin Joint Unified School District. These workshops offered in-depth training tailored to each district's unique needs, focusing on effective governance, strategic planning, and strengthening collaboration between board members and district leadership.

Participants engaged in interactive discussions, explored best practices for student-centered decision-making, and gained actionable tools to enhance board effectiveness and district outcomes. These sessions reflect SSDA's ongoing commitment to supporting small and rural districts with practical, high-impact professional development for their leadership teams.