

Cecily Kiester (she/her)

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Community Outreach, Workforce Development, and Education Leader

Dynamic community engagement professional with 20+ years of experience building trusted, equity-focused partnerships across K–12 systems, state agencies, nonprofits, workforce councils, and regional organizations. Most recently working across Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Grays Harbor Counties, can demonstrate ability to engage historically underserved and rural communities, facilitate large and small group convenings, and navigate complex government, funding, and policy environments. Skilled in community needs assessment, cross-sector collaboration, capacity building, and relationship-based outreach. Known for leading multi-stakeholder initiatives, advising leaders on community needs, and creating equitable pathways that expand access to education, funding, and opportunity.

Core Competencies

Community Engagement & Outreach • Stakeholder Relationship Management • Educational Leadership • Government Relations • Capacity-Building & Technical Assistance • Equity & Inclusion Strategies • Universal Design for Learning • Large & Small-Group Facilitation • Cross-Sector Collaboration • Funding & Resource Navigation • Program Development & Strategic Planning • Data-Informed Community Needs Assessment • Public Speaking & Meeting Facilitation • Regional Partnership Development • Grant & Program Compliance Support • Crisis/Emergency Communications Support • Project & Time Management

Professional Experience

Regional Administrator, Career Connected Learning

Educational Service District 113 | May 2022 – July 2025

Regional leader supporting forty-four school districts across five counties (Thurston, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Mason) to expand equitable access to career pathways, workforce development opportunities, and community-engaged programming. Built and sustained collaborative partnerships that connected K–12 leaders, higher education, workforce councils, local Tribes, government agencies, and business partners across communities. Outcomes include:

- Conducted ongoing community outreach and engagement across the five-county region, identifying local needs and connecting education and community leaders with appropriate programs, funding, and state-level partners.
- Delivered direct technical assistance to school districts to implement, enhance, and fund CTE and career-connected learning programs, leading to expanded programming in rural communities and improved equitable access for youth.
- Supported CCW Regional Network (Capital STEM Alliance) to increase executive committee, overall membership, and outreach. Increased number of supported and funded CBOs, school districts, and local businesses over three years.
- Assisted local community organizations and businesses to secure over \$1 million in grant funding (Career Connect Washington, Washington Job Initiative, Apprenticeship Building America) for their

regional education and workforce development projects. (Including in Grays Harbor County, Thurston County, and Lewis County)

- Led cross-agency collaboration with WSAC, SBCTC, and regional colleges to implement HB1136, training financial aid navigators and aligning state, regional, and district partners.
- Directed a multi-year High School to Postsecondary (H2P) project with Chehalis School District leadership, using quantitative and qualitative data to identify root causes impacting regional postsecondary enrollment and financial aid completion among students in historically marginalized populations.
- Served on the Leaders in Education Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Racial Justice (LEADER) advisory committee at ESD 113. Assisted with research, advising, and grant writing to secure a \$300,000 grant to support recruiting and retaining educators of color in the Capital Region.
- Facilitated community and regional convenings, workshops, and professional learning sessions for educators, nonprofits, libraries, and economic development organizations.

Executive Director / Head of School

Insight Washington – Stride, Inc. (K12) | 2018 – 2021

Led a statewide, alternative public virtual school serving 2,500+ students. Built strategic partnerships with district sponsors, legislators, and community organizations. Oversaw 150 staff, multimillion-dollar budget, program operations, compliance, public and government affairs, and community engagement. Outcomes include:

- Implemented policy and program improvements using academic performance data, increasing graduation and proficiency rates and improving statewide accountability results.
- Represented virtual and alternative learning communities at the legislative and state agency level, advocating for equitable funding and expanded CTE access.
- Led staff development focused on equity, culturally responsive practice, and inclusive engagement, improving schoolwide satisfaction and outcomes.
- Managed cross-functional teams to respond to community needs, support families, and coordinate regional resources, specifically during the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

Manager, Regional Operations, West; Internal Compliance Review

Stride, Inc. (K12) | 2014 – 2018

Managed operational health, product implementation, and multi-state engagement across CA, WA, OR, NV, and ID. Supported local leaders and community partners in navigating compliance requirements, funding processes, and school operations. Outcomes include:

- Led launch of multiple new public virtual schools, coordinating stakeholders across state agencies, vendors, community groups, and internal departments.
- Conducted 25+ compliance site reviews, coaching local teams on state/federal compliance, leading to improved audit outcomes and increased funding capture.
- Facilitated cross-sector collaboration, training, and ongoing communication between regional partners, school leaders, and state education contacts.

Additional Roles (Registrar, Project Analyst, School Systems Support Specialist)

Stride, Inc. (K12) | 2008 – 2014

- Supported community-facing school operations, student services, and partner communication.
- Analyzed data, supported onboarding for new schools, and facilitated training for staff and leaders.

Instructor – Music, Choir, Humanities

Sherwood School District, OR | 2005 – 2008

- Developed inclusive, community-centered instructional programs and facilitated performances and public events.
- Coordinated with parents, volunteers, and school leadership on student engagement and cultural programming.

EDUCATION & CREDENTIALS

Master of Education, Curriculum & Instruction

Portland State University

Bachelor of Arts, Music (Summa Cum Laude)

Portland State University

Trainer, AI Innovators in Education

Microsoft & AESD, Washington State

Community Boards and Advisory Committee Participation

- Lewis County Transit – REVIT Clean Energy Curriculum Project Advisory Board Member (Lewis County)
- Tumwater School District – Middle School CTE Advisory Board Chair (Thurston County)
- Shelton School District – CTE Community Advisory Board Member (Mason County)
- South Sound CTE Advisory Council Board Member (Lewis, Mason, Thurston Counties)
- Capital STEM Alliance Executive Committee Member (Lewis, Mason, Thurston, Grays Harbor, Pacific)
- Career Connect Washington Career Connected Learning Coordinator Workgroup Member (Statewide)
- Westport Maritime Development Steering Committee Member (Grays Harbor County)
- Twin Harbors CTE Comprehensive Needs Assessment Advisory Member (Grays Harbor County)
- Tumwater School District School Improvement Community Advisory Board Member (Thurston County)

Workshops, Events, and Public Presentations

Organizer/Facilitator:

- Construction Try-A-Trade Student Event, partnering with Capital STEM Alliance, PacMtn WDC, and South Sound Building and Construction Trades Council (2024)
- Pathways to Education Roundtable, partnering with ESD 113 and the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2024)
- AI for Educators Workshop Series with ESD 113 (2024, 2025)
- ESD 113 Regional Workforce Development Needs Assessment Session for School Superintendents (2023)

Presenter/Co-Presenter:

- South Puget Sound Migrant Youth Conference Session on the High School and Beyond Plan, partnered with interpreters and local migrant youth advocates. (2023)
- Moving Forward Together [Keynote](#) on Youth STEM Education, partnered with Timberland Regional Library (2025)
- Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation Expo [Breakout Session](#) on STEM Education (2024)
- WA State NAGC Conference Session on Workforce Development as Gifted Student Intervention (2023)
- National NAGC Conference Session on Workforce Development as Gifted Student Intervention (2024)
- Washington Association of CTE Educators Conference Session (2023, 2024)
- Financial Aid Navigator Training Conference session, with local colleges, SBCTC, and WSAC