

State audit calls for more oversight at alternative schools

PORTLAND (AP) — A state audit calls for more oversight and heightened scrutiny on Oregon’s nearly 50 alternative high schools and online schools in order to stop the flood of dropouts.

The report the Secretary of State’s audit division made public Wednesday says these schools account for nearly half of the dropouts in Oregon despite enrolling only 10 percent of the state’s high school students.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the roughly 19,000 students enrolled at these schools are at the greatest risk of dropping out, and these schools often avoid state criticism and accountability.

The audit says these schools typically serve students who have been previously poorly served at public schools.

The audit says the state’s failure to monitor and examine the schools’ techniques and programs leads to more poor service for these students.

Commentary... Don’t chase resolutions, chase habits

By Audry Van Houweling, PMHNP
Columnist

The New Year is upon us. It is that time of year again when we feel a surge of inspiration to tackle those resolutions — lose weight, quit smoking, read more books, travel — you know the drill. The beginning of a New Year can feel like a fresh start, which at least for a while can jumpstart our motivation into action.

Now for the bad news: most resolutions fail. We start the year feeling optimistic and then all too often life seems to get in the way and our motivation dwindles. Sound familiar? Many of us have our sights set on an outcome and rely on motivation to take us there. Ultimately however, motivation is all too fleeting.

Have you ever heard someone speak, watched a powerful movie, or read something that spoke to you and compelled you to make change? We have all had experiences when we heard or saw something that was incredibly “motivating.” In the moment we feel convinced that we will make changes, yet often fail to fill in the blanks of how we will accomplish this change. Again, motivation is not enough.

Let’s put resolutions and motivation aside and instead talk about habits. Habits demand practice and

practice makes habit. Habits also take commitment and intentionality. Starting a new habit can feel unfamiliar and therefore, demands planning. For example, if you want to start exercising in 2018 that is wonderful, but now it is time to ask why, when, where, and how?

Asking “why” is important. It helps us clarify the importance of developing new habits. Why do you want to start exercising? To be fit? To be strong? Why is being fit or strong important to you? Do you want to feel more energy, be more attractive? Why then is that important to you? Are you attempting to make changes for yourself or someone else?

The “when” can be particularly important especially with our tight schedules, kids, and other

priorities. Look at your planner, think about how long you are going to exercise, write it down, schedule it, be intentional, and be realistic! If you need to, let those around you know about your plans for both accountability and to avoid disruption.

“Where” is this exercise going to take place? I live in the Pacific Northwest and while I prefer to breathe fresh air, weather can be a hindrance. Are you going to bundle up? Get a gym membership? Find some open floor space in your home?

“How” are you going to exercise? What are you actually going to do in the gym, outside, or at home? Are you going to link up with a buddy or partner to help with accountability? Do you need a new pair of gym shoes? Do you need to set an alarm?

Be realistic with yourself. Be patient — it is okay to start slow. If you want to run a half marathon, but have spent more time on your couch then on your feet in 2017, a 15-minute brisk walk may be your first step.

Be committed. Set a goal and stick to it. There will be days when staying committed sounds like a drag — perhaps most days if you are just getting started. Go back to the reasons why staying committed is important to you. Showing up can truly be half the battle.

Give yourself pats on the back. Congratulate yourself when you do the work and most importantly, remember to judge your own success, not that of somebody else.

Happy New Year and cheers to being creatures of habit!



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