

Oregon high school sophomores face CIM testing

The Associated Press

PORTLAND — Oregon high school sophomores are facing what may be the most feared tests of their young lives. Yet many wonder if the results even matter.

Even if sophomores do poorly on the certificate of initial mastery tests, the state's award of achievement, they could still be promoted. At all but one high school, they could still get a diploma. No Oregon colleges require the certificate for admission.

"A lot of us are frustrated with the fact that we have to take the test, and we don't know what we are working toward," said Erin Adkins, a Cleveland High School sophomore.

In a recent survey by The Oregonian of 160 Portland-area sophomores, most said nothing would happen if they didn't earn a certificate this year.

In a survey of 50 Oregon school district superintendents, most said the results matter to legislators and the state Department of Education, not to students, and that there is no consequence for failing to earn the certificate.

"When you try to tell them it's important, they say 'For what?'" said Tom Hayes, director of instruction for the Bend-La Pine School District.

"Besides personal pride, what is the motivation for a student to work hard to receive this certificate when the real deal is a high school diploma?" asked George Crace, a Wilsonville High School social studies teacher.

Architects of the 1991 education reform act that launched the tests envisioned that a certificate would carry consequences.

They thought that the reading, writing and math skills would be

valued and required by educators, employers and college officials.

The standards to earn a certificate of initial mastery, or CIM, were not adopted until 1996, giving this year's sophomores -- the first group eligible to earn certificates -- only two years to prepare.

Only Reynolds High School, in Troutdale, requires the certificate for graduation.

Yet eight years after Oregon adopted the reform law, efforts are emerging to give the certificates clout.

A measure in the Legislature would give students who earn a CIM a \$1,500-a-year renewable scholarship if they go to college in Oregon.

Some business leaders are beginning to see that success on the certificate can predict success on their own pre-employment tests.

That was the finding of a study

of 270 high school students, commissioned by the Oregon Business Council, the state Department of Education and the state's university system.

"I think it reaffirms that the CIM will be a valuable certificate," said Duncan Wyse, president of the business council.

Some business leaders say they will ask job applicants whether they have a certificate.

"When it is in place, and we start to see people walk in the door with that, I believe that we will be taking that into account," said Wendy Hawkins, education relations manager for Intel, the computer chip-maker that has 11,000 employees in Oregon.

Starting in 2005, the certificate of advanced mastery will be awarded to students who have reached the state's new goals for 12th-graders.

The Oregon Business Council is spreading the word about the certificates so that more employers will be asking about them.

By 2005, Oregon universities hope to rely more on the certificates in determining if students should be admitted, although the certificates still won't be required.

The certificate won't be required for admission to Oregon's private colleges and universities, but they will take note of whether an eligible student has earned one, said Gary Andeen, executive director of the Oregon Independent Colleges Association.

"I would not want to be applying to a college from a CIM high school and not have achieved a CIM," Andeen said, "because the question would be, 'Why haven't you achieved a certificate of initial mastery?'"

History

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The Emerald also advocated the betterment of student life on campus. When the faculty was voting on whether to give students a Thanksgiving break, the Emerald supported the proposal on its editorial page: "Few students can go home if the vacation is not allowed," a 1922 editorial argued.

The newspaper also took a stand in opposing faculty proposals to establish a six-day school week and switch the University from a term to a semester system.

Throughout the 1920s, the University experienced massive growth. As increasing numbers of students flooded the school, new buildings sprung up to support the burgeoning school.

During the mid-1920s the University began its construction on Knight Library and McArthur Court. New science, journalism

and business administration buildings were constructed and, after intense debate between students and the administration, the University purchased land for a proposed student union if students agreed to foot the bill.

In a matter of weeks, students collected the \$200,000 necessary for the construction. When plans to begin construction were put into effect, "students danced the night away in their revelry and excitement."

While the Emerald focused attention on the basic happenings on campus such as assemblies and football games, often giving them front page status, it also reported on political events as well.

The newspaper devoted many of its editorials to encouraging students to vote and participate in the "events that are changing history."

Throughout the years, the Emerald had an almost eerie sense of what those events were. In 1923, the Emerald predicted that there would be a second world war in the coming years.

"It looks as though the world has not learned the lessons of peace, just as it did not learn the lessons from the war," an editorial proclaimed.

The paper also foresaw the increase in racial tension in the country. In quoting a bishop who visited the campus in 1924, the paper said "war is inevitable" and such a war "is only going to be a racial war."

This increase in racial tension was evident on campus in the mid-1920s as the Ku Klux Klan often came onto campus to recruit students.

But by 1929 the issues of race were replaced in the Emerald by issues of the

economy. Throughout the 1920s, the Emerald reported that Europe was suffering mass unemployment and economic stress. When the stock market crashed on October 24, 1929, economic issues were placed on the front burner.

In a front page story a week after the crash, the Emerald reported a complete economic crash was likely and that "a massive depression" would result.

An economics professor was quoted as saying that "The stock market break was bound to come, and once it is started, there is no way to stop it."

But perhaps the biggest irony comes from a 1923 story about a professor's trip to Eastern Europe. The headline read: "Balkan Trouble Fly in Political Ointment."

Even after 80 years of history, some things haven't changed.

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