



WINNING CRAFTSMEN: Winners in Cottrell School's recent scale modeling contest are (upper photo) fourth graders Wendy Janzen and Dave Morton. Above, Don Roessel stands behind his model car engine while David Janzen poses behind his detailed ship model. The brother and sister team of Wendy and David walked off with both first place trophies in the contest.

Scale model magicians

Salem scene

Competency of '78 seniors due for legislative exam

by Jack Zimmerman
Associated Oregon Industries

The 30,000-odd teenagers graduating from Oregon's 237 high schools in a few short weeks are supposed to be better equipped to function in society than any of their predecessors.

At least that was the goal nearly a decade ago when the State Department of Education began a systematic revision of graduation requirements and minimum standards for public education.

And the Oregon Legislature appears bound to spend considerable time and effort assessing the results.

In essence, graduation requirements for this year's seniors consist of earning 21 or more credits for course study, specific attendance requirements and certain competencies. The latter—minimum competencies to be specific—are to blame for more stir and confusion than any other recent educational development since new math.

Developed largely in response to public outcry for accountability by education, the minimum competencies evolved over a five-year period involving extensive public opinion surveys, meetings, hearings and pilot studies prior to adoption in 1974.

In order to meet the competency requirement, 1978 graduates are expected to demonstrate an ability to apply knowledge, understanding and-or skills to life-role situations. At least that's the explanation published by a legislative task force that conducted a study of the situation late last year.

The Task Force on Minimum Competencies and Graduation Requirements was one of the 1977 Legislature's first six such investigative panels appointed to study issues likely to arise during the next regular biennial session in 1979.

Impetus for its appointed assignment was spurred by a measure introduced last session that called essentially for more definitive competencies than those adopted by the State Board of Education.

More than 200 people turned out for a hearing on that bill. Lawmakers quickly perceived the issue did not lend itself to speedy resolution and opted for interim examination.

And after five hearings and a work session during the 90-day life of the resultant task force study, members of that body unanimously concluded even further study is necessary.

In this particular case, there appears little other consensus among educators, lawmakers, the public and even students attempting to qualify for diplomas.

Specifically, this year's graduates are required to demonstrate competencies in reading, writing, speaking, listening, analyzing and computing. Unless the Oregon Legislature or some other body changes the plan, 1981 graduates also will be expected to demonstrate similar competencies in basic science and technology, mental and physical health—along with a level of knowledge about citizenship, environment and their rights and responsibilities on streets and highways and as consumers of goods and services.

Hardly anyone argues with the fact it would be desirable for high school seniors to graduate with adequate levels of competency in all of the foregoing. But objections to enforcement of current competencies and those planned for 1981 are many and as varied as there are people with opinions.

Part of the resistance to the concept stems from its

Lamm listed on honor roll

Carolyn Lamm, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Lamm, 38732 Hood Street, Sandy, is listed on the winter term honor roll at George Fox College.

Lamm is a senior psychology-sociology major at the Newberg college. To be listed on the honors list students must receive a 3.5 grade average or higher while taking a minimum of 12 credit hours.

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newness. Another involves a lack of competency uniformity among individual school districts. Other critics fear minimum competencies will not be a floor of educational achievement but have a tendency to lower the ceiling. Probably the greatest public objection—and that voiced most persistently by lawmakers studying the program—is tying competencies to graduation requirements.

The task force recommends minimum competencies in basic skills be utilized in elementary and junior high programs only.

Competency based education is achieving growing attention throughout the country and nearly every state adopting it has some wrinkle making its program unique. Again, lack of uniformity causes concern.

If it has its way, the legislative task force will be reactivated this year to study the experience of 1978 graduates. And it recommends no further competencies be activated until benefits of current requirements are thoroughly examined.

The push and shove between lawmakers and educators is nothing new. And it is a continually interesting phenomenon during legislative sessions because the legislature controls an increasingly significant amount of education's money.

All this does little to ease apprehension of those who wonder whether certain of this year's high school seniors will miss commencement exercises for failing to demonstrate proficiency in current competency requirements. Educators believe this will occur. But, they point out, the number of seniors failing to graduate probably won't be more or less than at the end of any other school year.

Students who can't achieve the competency requirements, they claim, are those having trouble collecting sufficient course credits.

Whatever the outcome, it is increasingly appropriate the traditional word used to describe graduation ceremonies is commencement. High school graduation continues to be a new beginning for those receiving diplomas.

And for the Class of '78, graduation will mark commencement of an investigation to determine whether its members are winners or losers in this struggle to improve competency.

Burning season to start

The spring backyard burning season for Northwest Oregon is scheduled to begin Friday, April 14.

Burning of leaves, clippings and trimmings from yard cleanup will be allowed on a day to day basis, depending on weather conditions through May 21.

The burning period does not exempt residents from any local fire regulations, which in most Oregon counties require that a

burning permit be obtained from a local fire station, said a spokesman for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality.

Daily announcements on local radio stations will indicate whether burning is allowed on a given day. The determination is based on weather conditions affecting air pollution potential. Burning is not permitted after sundown.



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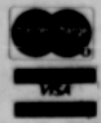
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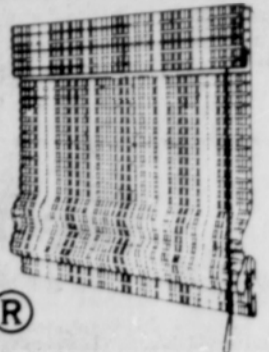


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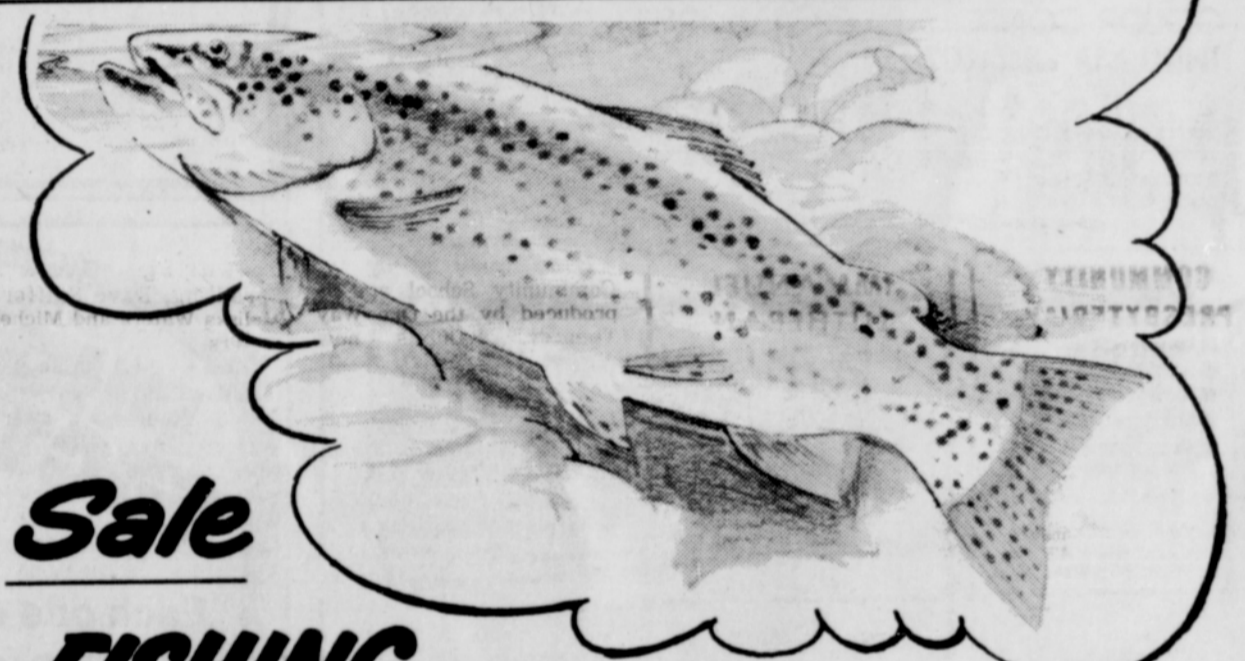
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