

School image problem scorned

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Verne Duncan, stumping for reelection Nov. 7, told a Sandy Chamber of Commerce crowd of 40 persons Oct. 10 that Oregon schools suffer from a lingering image problem that is not deserved.

He compared the image of Oregon schools to that of a reformed drunk who is remembered more for what problems he once presented to the community than his present mended condition.

"They (critics) are remembering what our schools were like 10 or 20 years ago," Duncan countered. "Scholastic Aptitude Test scores statewide have lagged," he said, "but now are on the rise."

Duncan opposes Mt. Hood Community College instructor Ruth McFarland in the election.

Duncan, from Milwaukie, is a former North Clackamas County superintendent and a former University of

Oregon instructor.

"Those good old days (in school) might have seemed good for you who made it through the schools," Duncan told the chamber group, "but a lot of people fell by the wayside because we didn't have programs for them."

Oregon schools, he said, have set an example nationwide in special education as recognized by the U.S. Office of Education, which sends other educators to Oregon for study.

Oregon schools also offer more vocational training today with the realization that not all students are academically oriented, Duncan said. He added that Oregon's escape from new-math problems and reading deficiencies also shows the new direction of the state school system.

"Now we recognize that written composition skills are weak in Oregon schools," he said, "and I think you'll see some improvement in that area." Overall, Oregon students rate above the

national average in all areas except French, Duncan said.

The most positive thing Duncan finds in today's state school system is a new attitude of eagerness and discipline on the part of grade school students, something he senses from comments by teachers statewide.

Schools in the 1960s started taking on a variety of functions including child-rearing, he said. Today the feeling is that discipline belongs at home. There is generally less experimenting with instruction in today's Oregon school, he said.

Duncan expressed concern over school funding methods, noting that approximately 90 percent of people in the state have no assurance that their school system will operate next year, due to present method of funding.

He opposes Ballot Measure 6, however, as potentially harmful to state financing, and said he will vote for Measure 11.

