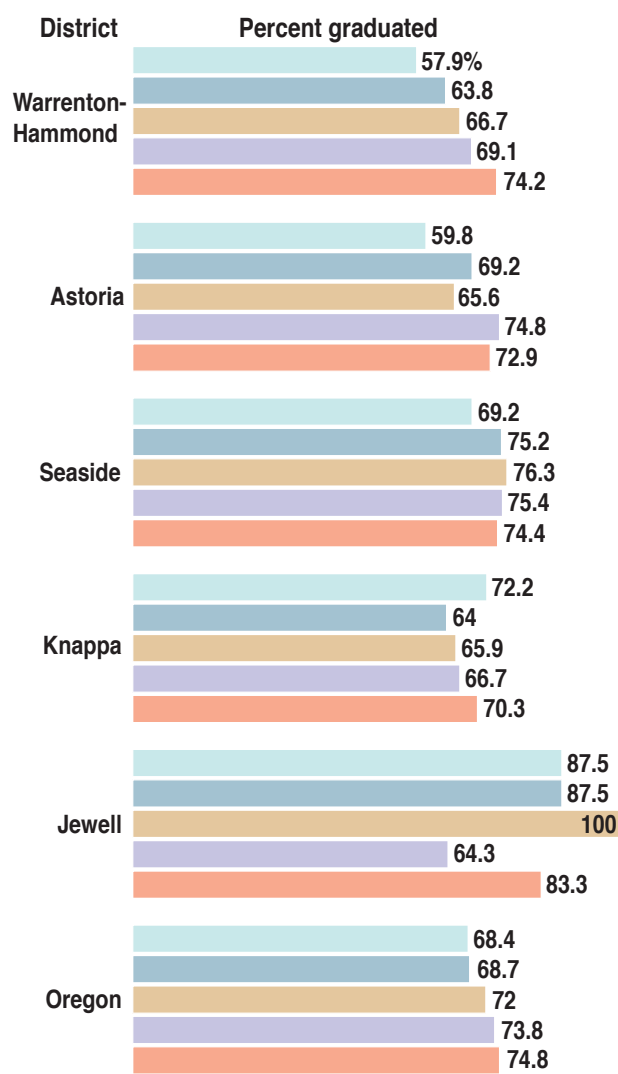


## Clatsop County graduation rates

Graduation rates for the five area school districts compared to the Oregon state average for the last five years.



Source: Oregon Dept. of Education

Edward Stratton and Alan Kenaga/EO Media Group

## Grad rates: Smaller schools can experience significant fluctuations based on a few students

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### More support

"I do think it's the work we've done in my time here that we're starting to see the effects of," Warrenton-Hammond Superintendent Mark Jeffery, in his sixth year with the district, said of the district's continual increases. "We're hoping to see it to continue to improve."

Jeffery said Warrenton has increased staffing for remedial support and focused on making sure eighth-graders are ready to enter high school.

"I've put a lot of emphasis in math over the last five years," Jeffery said. "That's one area that the majority of kids will struggle with coming into high school."

Principal Rod Heyen said Warrenton brought in retired math instructor Kate Gruetter part time to work with students, and provides after-school opportunities for students to make up homework and tests. "That has become really beneficial and become part of our culture here."

### Green, yellow, red

Each year, Heyen compiles a list of seniors, labeling them the color green if on track to graduate, yellow if one or two credits behind and red if more. "My goal is to get everybody in the green and everybody in the yellow over the hump," he said.

Heyen said he will try to counsel students in the red into a fifth year of high school, or even toward the GED exam if more realistic.

"Then I try to get them into

college classes as an incentive to get back into school," he said. "We're really, really trying to push that. I sit down and show them some of the numbers of money I'm spending on them (in subsidized tuition), and present it as a scholarship."

Part of the challenge, Heyen and Jeffery said, is how small Warrenton is. The district awarded 47 diplomas last year, out of a class of 66. Every student equals 1.5 percent of the group, meaning graduation rates can significantly fluctuate based on very few students.

### Bringing them in

Heyen said he gets many of his ideas from other districts, including Principal Lynn Jackson at Astoria High School, who, he added, is good about pulling in kids who might be falling through the cracks, regardless of the effect on the graduation rate.

Astoria regularly takes students from around the county into the Gray School Campus Alternative Education Program, a self-paced, largely online school for students who need to recover credits on their own schedules.

Heyen said he recently consulted with a fifth-year senior, living on her own with a job, who had been to several different high schools without finishing, but wants to try again.

"Behind the grad rate, you have a kid walking in the door saying he wants to try," Heyen said. "You've got to go after that."



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The U.S. Coast Guard fired a three-volley salute during the memorial Tuesday for the late Lt. Devin Hepner at Air Station Astoria. Hepner died of a pulmonary embolism Jan. 16 while attending an investigating officer course in Virginia.

## Hepner: Memorial full of tributes

Continued from Page 1A

"The time that I spent in the military, we had each other's backs," Hepner's father said. "But, we didn't always have each other's families' backs."

Phillips, one of several speakers paying tribute Tuesday, said he first met Devin Hepner in Hawaii in 2014, after graduating from officer candidate school in New London, Connecticut. "Literally, from that moment on, we were always by each other's side."

Phillips described Hepner as the Batman to his Robin, showing him what it meant to be a good officer and husband. When Hepner moved on to Sector Columbia River, Phillips said, "I felt like my brother had moved away."

### Unglamorous, but essential

Hepner had a round-about journey to the Coast Guard. After graduating from high school, he went on a two-year mission with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to St. Petersburg, Russia, where he worked in a local hospital and helped translate. Hepner met his wife while studying at Utah State University, and they married in 2005. He had been accepted to law school and trained to be a firefighter, but joined the Coast Guard in 2013 at the age of 30.

Hepner started as a marine inspector in Sector Honolulu. In his last assignment, he served in Warrenton as a detached duty officer with Sector Columbia River's Marine Safety Unit Portland, investigating spills, accidents and other suspicious activity among commercial and recreational vessels.

Capt. Thomas Griffiths, commander of the unit, said jobs like Hepner's aren't glamorous or likely to garner a reality television show. But whether Hepner was condemning a life jacket or checking for a leak in a hatch, Griffiths said, positions like his help prevent "many bad things from happening on the water."



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Lt. j.g. Ross Phillips, a close friend of the late Lt. Devin Hepner, accompanied his body from Virginia to his funeral in Utah. He spoke Tuesday at Air Station Astoria of how Hepner had pushed him to become a better officer and husband.

Hepner's memorial was full of tributes by his fellow servicemen, which Capt. William Timmons, commander of Sector Columbia River, said was a testament to how much

people respected and admired Hepner.

"To honor his memory, let us sustain lives forever in the same spirit of generosity, friendliness, kindness and

goodwill that we know Devin represented," Timmons said. "To Erin, we will always be here for you and yours. You will always be a part of the Coast Guard family."

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