

# Valedictorians' days numbered? Schools rethink class ranking

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AP Photo/Carolyn Thompson  
**Daniel Buscaglia, 17, looks through the program from the previous night's senior awards banquet at Lancaster High School in Lancaster, N.Y., earlier this month. Buscaglia's 101.9 grade point average earned him the honor of valedictorian of his graduating class of nearly 500 students, but at many American high schools, the tradition of ranking students from No. 1 on down is being replaced by honors that recognize everyone who scores at a certain threshold.**

issue, though he feels for the 11th-ranked student who falls just short of the recognition awarded to the top 10 seniors honored at the annual banquet.

Graduating Lancaster senior Connor Carrow, 17, has pressed for the switch to Latin honors since his sophomore year, well before landing just out of the top 10, at No. 14, while serving as student union president and playing varsity lacrosse and hockey. He said it's a better fit with the school's collaborative and cooperative ideals.

"You're striving for that (honor) personally, but you're not hoping that you're better than these other 400 people next to you," Carrow said.

The view was somewhat different from the No. 1 spot occupied by Carrow's classmate Daniel Buscaglia, who

also played saxophone in several performance ensembles and volunteered in his town's youth bureau. While he doesn't oppose the change, Buscaglia expects the competition in high school, although it was mostly friendly, will help him at Cornell University in the fall.

Elsewhere, commenters have peppered news websites with disparaging comparisons to giving "participation trophies" to avoid hurt feelings, while supporters point out the often statistically insignificant differences that separate students.

## Class rank

Rankings still play an important part in aspects of the college admissions process. There are scholarships for the top-ranked students, and the number of top students at

colleges is factored into college rankings. Class ranks are also credited with improving diversity at the University of Texas, where a law guaranteed that a school's top 10 percent would be accepted into a public university.

Colleges are adjusting to the increasing number of applications arriving without class rank, though many applications still ask for it if available. Even so, students' individual grades and the rigor of the curriculum they chose tend to weigh more heavily, said Melanie Gottlieb, deputy director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

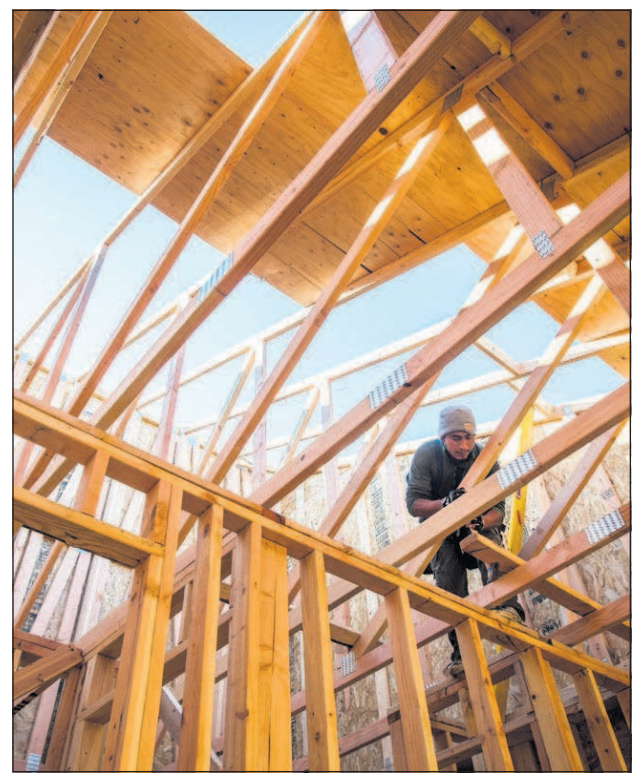
"More and more schools are moving toward a more holistic process. They look deeper into the transcript," Gottlieb said.

Wisconsin's Elmbrook School District has for several years ranked only the valedictorian and salutatorian, and only then because the state awards scholarships to schools' top two graduates, according to Assistant Superintendent Dana Monogue. The change has been accepted by colleges and community alike, Monogue said.

"We are encouraged by any movement that helps students understand that they're more than a score, that they're more than a rank," she said.

## 48 valedictorians

Tennessee's Rutherford County schools give the valedictorian title to every student who meets requirements that include a 4.0 grade-point average and at least 12 honors courses. Its highly ranked Central Magnet School had 48 valedictorians this year, about a quarter of its graduating class.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

**The new Yacht Club Apartments under construction on Astoria's south side in 2015. A developer has proposed a 32-unit apartment complex near the old Yacht Club offices.**

# Apartments: Housing is the 'monster' problem in Astoria right now

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Astoria, like other cities on the North Coast, has experienced a housing shortage. Economists and business leaders have pointed to a lack of rental housing, in particular, as a barrier to economic growth. City councilors have suggested property near the old Yacht Club as an option for housing projects.

Astoria Community Development Director Kevin Cronin mentioned the new apartment project at a City Council work session Wednesday morning.

The council was discuss-

ing Advance Astoria, a draft five-year economic development strategy, but many of the topics cycled back to Astoria's lack of available housing, especially lower-income and workforce housing.

Housing is the "monster" problem in Astoria right now, Cronin said when asked to identify obstacles to economic development.

Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear asked if the apartment complex Barnes plans to build would provide any low-cost housing.

Cronin said he was told the apartments would rent at market rate.

# Monument: 'We hope to make this happen, but we also have to be fiscally responsible'

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groundbreaking event around the same time. As discussions dragged on last year, that big hope changed to a small hope that at least there could be something new to announce by the time the festival arrived.

"Right now I don't really have any announcement to make," Mathews said. "What we need to do is we need to get (the city) to sit down with us so we can ask what guarantees do they want."

"In one sense, I understand where they are," Mathews added. But, he said, "I'm a little disappointed we aren't able to move a little faster."

The group was considering a site off Marine Drive between 15th and 16th streets for a potential monument, an underused area called Peoples Park. At a presentation last June, Mathews said he believed the park would be an ideal location and could help "fill Astoria's shortage of urban plazas," a shortage identified in the parks and recreation comprehensive plan. He believed there was community support for the monument and that a dedicated group of volunteers could maintain the site.

At the time, the Parks and Recreation Board said the project was well-planned, but cautioned against adding new parks, facilities or services until the department had addressed other higher-priority projects.

## Private donations

The heritage association planned to use private donations to pay for the monument's construction if the city contributed the land. But the question of long-term maintenance costs — and who would pay — stalled the

project. The association, at the time, could only commit to power-washing the monument twice a year for three years and promise to help organize community cleanup events.

City Councilor Cindy Price had recommended looking at corporate sponsors to help underwrite long-term maintenance costs for the monument last November. At the time, the city sought sponsors who could agree to maintain the monument for a 10-year-or-more period.

"We hope to make this happen, but we also have to be fiscally responsible," LaMear said at the time. "So let's figure out a way where we can do both."

Now, LaMear says she still supports the idea of a Scandinavian monument, but the association needs to figure out who would maintain it.

"The city just doesn't have the ability to do that," she said.

## Few visitors

Peoples Park used to have a wooden viewing platform and was maintained through an agreement with the Astoria Rotary Club. The city removed the structure in 2015 after the parks maintenance team noted that one of the hand rails had fallen off and decking boards and structural supports were rotting. Even before then, the parks department faced significant challenges with the park, routinely dealing with illegal drugs, alcohol, garbage and illegal camping on and under the platform.

Now, the park is an empty, grassy area. Local volunteers serve lunch to homeless and low-income people in a small parking lot nearby, but otherwise the park sees few visitors.



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

**Firefighter Jimmy Huddleston logs information about routine equipment maintenance while on duty at the Seaside Fire Department. The department plans to narrow suppliers down to two companies in July.**

# Seaside Fire: Funds will help meet shortfalls

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Ideally, every firefighter in Seaside will have access to a pack, with spares, he said. Daniels said he hopes to ultimately have 45 packs to meet the needs of a full roster. But even with the grant funds, "we're still probably going to be short," he said.

Funds from the May levy will help meet shortfalls, along with extra parts, facepieces and training.

## Simulations

The department plans to

narrow suppliers down to two companies in July, followed by demonstrations of test equipment in simulated situations. Final selection will be made by a committee of eight firefighters.

Daniels said he received grant-writing assistance from Chief Jeff Golightly of the Lewis and Clark Fire District, who won a similar grant last year. Daniels said he hopes that other county departments receive items on their wish lists.

"Everything that we get or they get benefits our county as a whole," he said.



**The new grant awarded to the Seaside Fire Department will upgrade certain components of the safety equipment system.**

# Quota: States to have one more fishing day upriver

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"The combined catch in the lower river rose somewhat more quickly than expected," said Ron Roler, a fishery manager for Washington. "We knew this would be a popular fishery, and that's definitely turned out to be the case."

In a quick flyover a week ago Wednesday, observers counted over 700 boats on the

Lower Columbia River, and then counted close to 1,000 on Saturday. Trucks and boat trailers clogged launch areas in Clatsop County from John Day to Hammond. Fishery managers estimate there were around 12,000 angler trips total.

It was the first time the retention fishery had been open in three years. Fishery managers had shut it down

in 2014 to give the sturgeon population a chance rebuild. This May, however, fishery managers estimated there were close to 165,000 legal-size sturgeon in the Columbia River and announced the opening of a retention fishery. Ultimately, fishermen were able to fish five of the scheduled six days.

And anglers who haven't already met their annual

quota of two sturgeon will have another chance at the fish.

The states have also announced they will open a one-day sturgeon retention fishery upriver from Bonneville Dam to The Dalles Dam and on adjacent tributaries June 23. Under that area's harvest guidelines, there are about 144 sturgeon still available.