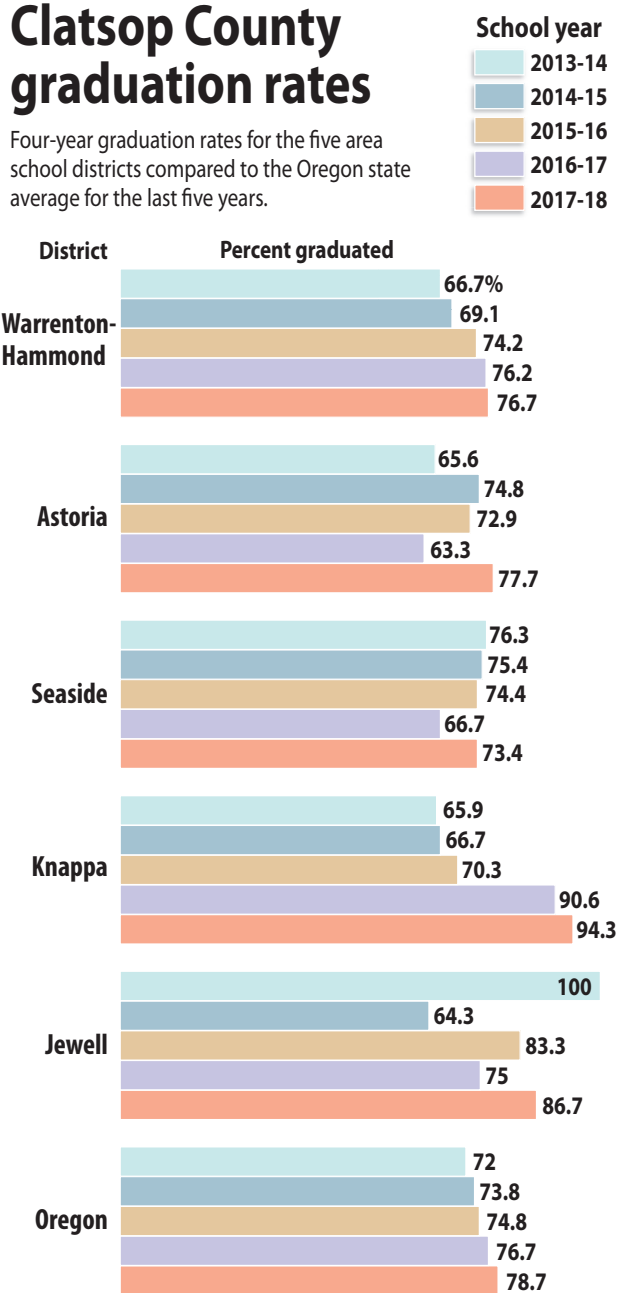


Clatsop County graduation rates

Four-year 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

Graduation: 'These are the type of programs that excite students'

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dropout prevention programs in high school. The measure has helped fund a six-week summer school to help about 20 at-risk eighth-graders get a head start, Jackson said. The measure has also helped the school district add more diverse programs such as agriculture and a Future Farmers of America club.

"These are the type of programs that excite students in their passions and interest, and in turn their learning," Jackson said.

Jackson also credited partnerships Astoria has created with groups like the Northwest Regional Education Service District and the Lower Columbia Hispanic Council to help low-income and Hispanic students.

Warrenton High School, with a 76.7 percent graduation rate, continued

a steady upward climb extending back at least seven years. The school district has been lauded for academic success despite containing more than half the students in the county considered homeless.

Seaside, which had dipped in the 2016-17 school year, was back up to 73.4 percent last year. The school district has commonly posted a graduation rate of around 75 percent.

Knappa, which posted a 20 percent increase in its graduation rate in 2016-17 at more than 90 percent, again improved, last year reaching 94.3 percent.

Jewell School, a small K-12 campus, posted a 78.7 percent graduation rate last year, a 10 percent increase from 2016-17 but down from the last 100 percent graduation rate the school district achieved in 2013-14.



Kathleen Morgan

The Astoria High School Class of 2018 posted a 77.7 percent on-time graduation rate, the highest Principal Lynn Jackson said he can remember in his 12 years as an administrator.

Councilor: Morden was committed to keeping the trolley running

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Don Morden was committed to keeping the trolley running and acted as scheduler of all the volunteers, conductors and motormen, a position he retired from in 2011.

"It was kind of a thankless task because it's kind of like herding cats," said Jim Wilkins, a retired contractor and trolley volunteer who served for a term on the City Council with Morden. "You have a lot of volunteers, nobody's getting paid, and you're trying to get them

to show up and fill shifts. If they didn't show up, Don would drive the trolley himself."

As Wilkins remembers it, Morden spent a lot of time filling in for people who didn't show up.

"He never complained, just did it," Wilkins said, adding, "He was a true gentleman and I would stress the 'gentle' part of that. Don wouldn't hurt a soul."

One of the great tragedies in Morden's life occurred when his wife died.

Anne Morden died in 2011 from injuries sus-



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

A property in the Evergreen Acres neighborhood near Elsie is overrun with trash.

Elsie: The county typically would sell the dilapidated property

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In situations like the one near Elsie, the county would typically sell the dilapidated property. For neighbors like Jette and Weber, that solution isn't adequate.

They feel the property is in such disarray that it is practically unsellable, which makes them worry the blight and potential pollution will simply continue while it stays on the county's books.

Even if the property does sell, neighbors say there is no guarantee it will be cleaned up.

"I want them to clean it up, and then sell it," Weber said.

But that's a task easier said than done, Steele said. Though the county technically owns the property, the government is not liable for the mess it inherited, and faces legal hurdles

'WE CAN'T JUST REMOVE PROPERTY THAT ISN'T OURS. YOU HAVE TO TAKE STEPS TO NOTIFY THE OWNER OF THE ITEMS.'

Monica Steele, the interim county manager

when handling the personal effects left behind.

"We can't just remove property that isn't ours," Steele said. "You have to take steps to notify the owner of the items."

But there are notable exceptions made on a case-by-case basis, Steele said. Last year, county commissioners voted to take possession of a dilapidated property on G Road in Jeffers Garden a year ahead of schedule. The county is in the process of cleaning the property up after it was determined to be rapidly losing value.

Sirpa Duoos, a county property management specialist, said it's the aim of the county to make sure these types of properties sell.

"We will look at all the situations and come up with a reasonable minimum bid so it does sell," Duoos said.

Regardless of how the sale plays out, there is still an underlying frustration for Jette and Weber, who feel their complaints were overlooked for years.

"There should be no indifference to rural areas," Weber said. "(They) should get the same respect as anywhere else in the county."

Suit: Agency faces at least three other active lawsuits

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The lawsuit mirrors facts reported in November by The Oregonian. The story cited an internal Department of Human Services review of Secord's death that found mistakes in the way case workers handled prior interactions with the teen and his family.

The agency refused to provide records involving Secord to his relatives, the lawsuit contends.

A spokesperson for the child welfare agency did not immediately respond to a message to comment on the lawsuit.

The agency faces at least three other active lawsuits tied to the deaths of children. It may soon face several more.

The families of four people, two children who died in foster care and two adults allegedly killed by a foster child, have filed court papers saying that they are considering whether to sue the department.

Two more cases recently ended, with the state on track to pay a combined \$2.3 million to those children's surviving relatives.

In addition to the wrongful death lawsuits, state attorneys are defending the agency's actions in at least eight other civil suits involving children who survived.

The suit filed on Secord's behalf seeks \$3 million in noneconomic damages and \$400,000 in economic damages. A judge appointed Seaside attorney Jeremy Rust to represent the interests of Secord's estate earlier this month.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Christina Secord, left, Trevor Secord's mother, hugs friends and family before the start of a candlelight vigil in 2017 to remember the life of her son.

Cutest Baby

PHOTO CONTEST

Babies born between 1/1/18 - 12/31/18

Submit a Photo

By email: classifieds@dailyastorian.com

In person: Drop by our Astoria office and we'll scan the photo for you.

Deadline to enter
Fri., Jan. 25th @ 5pm