

# CONFRONTING ONGOING ISSUES



## CAREER AND VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Portland students are ready to work.

A five-year plan developed by the Portland Public Schools Career and Vocational/Technical Education Dept. gives Portland graduates the competitive edge they need to take their places as responsible adults.

Priority elements in the five-year plan include:

- Improvements at Benson Polytechnic High School, including redesigned curricula to better meet labor-market needs and prepare students for technical education. The physical plant must be renovated and the equipment improved to support the curricula.
- Continued participation in Portland Leaders' Roundtable, a group of business, education and local-government leaders that meets regularly to monitor youth-employment issues.
- Exploration of new working relationships with business and industry to identify companies and facilities where students can gain new and up-to-date competencies.
- Satellite academy programs strategically located across the school district to attract students from other attendance areas to exceptionally strong vocational-education programs.
- Regional planning and "shared-time" arrangements between Portland Public Schools and Portland Community College to eliminate duplication of course-

work and cut costs in some expensive programs. Other cooperative agreements with neighboring school districts will make nearby facilities, expertise and equipment available to Portland students.

## TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Pregnancy and motherhood are stressful times for young students facing uncertain futures.

Without the financial and emotional resources needed to make it through difficult times, those students and many other teenage parents need support and encouragement to stay in school, increase their self-sufficiency and become better parents.

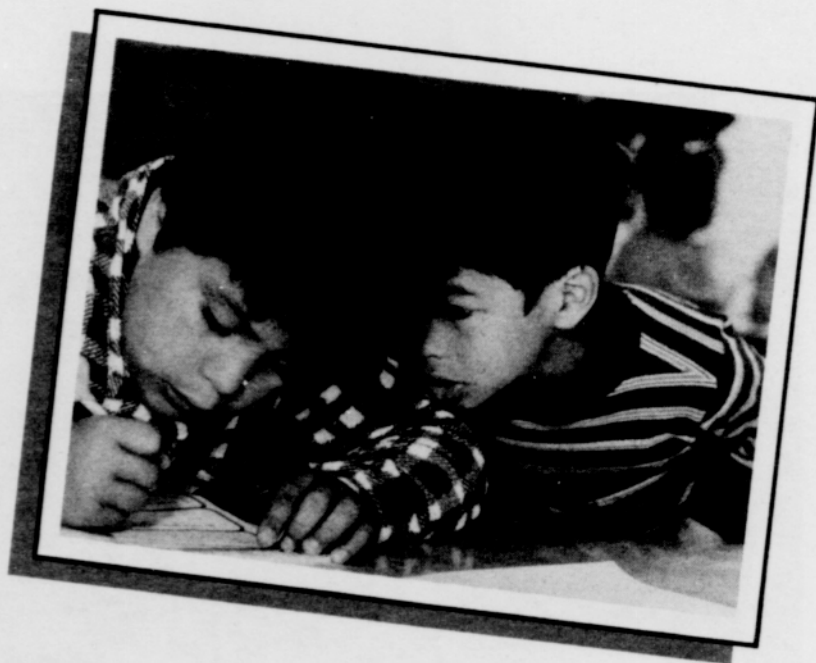
Portland Public Schools' Teen Parent Program is designed to help those pregnant teenagers and teenage parents.

The new program provides daycare, inschool support groups, parenting classes and special outreach services that bring young mothers back to school after they've dropped out following the births of their children.

The program expands on personal attention and services offered in the school district's Continuing Education for Girls (CEG), a program providing academic, parenting, health and vocational courses to pregnant teenagers and young mothers.

The Teen Parent Program, which began in October 1986, now is located at six Portland high schools and serves some 260 students.

An addition to the program is the Infant-Toddler Care Center, which provides daycare services to children of teenage parents.



## DROPOUTS

Portland Public Schools' dropout-prevention program, Project Return, has one top priority: 12- to 15-year-olds who cut school.

Those students — because of alcohol or drug abuse, disruptive family problems, trouble in making critical moves from middle school to high school or a variety of other reasons — are most "at risk" of becoming dropout statistics.

With school district dropout rates nearly 25 percent — a percentage still considered totally unacceptable — Portland Public Schools is battling to bring the dropouts back to school.

Project Return is leading that battle.

More than 1,100 Portland School District students were referred by their schools to Project Return counselors last year. Those counselors worked with students individually to get them back in school or enrolled in alternative programs.

Project Return counselors discuss the importance of school with students and help them develop goals, confidence and self-esteem. They watch for drug or alcohol abuse, visit student homes or workplaces if necessary and serve as a kind of "resource brokerage" in tying families and students to other service agencies and programs.

And Project Return is making an impact on dropout statistics.

Last year 53 percent of the students referred to Project Return returned to school. That statistic compares favorably to success rates in other programs for "at-risk" students nationwide.

Portland Public Schools is focusing particular attention on students making the transition between middle school and high school.

The dropout rate for ninth-grade students is 29 percent — the largest in any grade level.

Last year a special transitional classroom for students aged 12-15 was designed specifically to prepare students for high school.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Portland continues to recognize and serve the special needs of its changing student population.

Those efforts range from an expanded program for talented and gifted students, to improved programs for refugees, to helping teachers serve mildly disabled students in regular classrooms, to tailored help for athletes in the areas of study skills and time management.

## DAYCARE

Portland School District is extending the reach of schools to before- and after-school care because of needs expressed by parents.

More than 1,100 students now are served in programs at 25 Portland schools.

Daycare programs for students in kindergarten through Grade 5 are established in cooperation with a school's principal — providing space is available and the needs for such services have been documented.

Space is provided by schools without cost to nonprofit organizations.

The school district has developed a list of daycare and other community agencies interested in becoming providers so that, when needs are identified, resources are available.

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Effective drug-and-alcohol education involves much more than a single unit in a textbook or a class at one grade level.

Portland Public Schools follows an ongoing drug-education curricu-