

Education

More Students Meet High Academic Standards

Higher math scores lifted the percentages of students meeting Oregon's new academic standards, according to results of 1998 state tests in reading, math and writing.

Percentages of students tested who met state standards in reading, math and writing climbed in the three grades where all three subjects were tested. Thirty percent of the 5th graders met the standards, up from 18 percent, and 30 percent of the 8th graders passed, up from 19 percent. Twenty percent of the 10th graders met the standards, up from 13 percent.

"This is clear evidence that students are climbing up the academic ladder," said State Schools Supt. Norma Paulus. "I applaud math teachers and others who have made a difference."

Paulus said there is a simple formula to increasing student achievement. "All students should get the exposure to challenging math that our top students are currently getting."

To illustrate her point, Paulus noted that 10th graders enrolled in higher math courses were much more successful on the state math tests.

For instance, 71 percent of those taking Algebra 2 or higher passed the math test compared to only 9 percent who were enrolled in Algebra 1. Thirty-nine percent of those enrolled in Geometry passed the

test. However, only 23 percent of the 10th graders were enrolled in Algebra 2 or higher.

"My message to parents," said Paulus, "is to insist that your children are given challenging math courses by the time they

who pass state reading, math and writing tests and meet local requirements will earn a Certificate of Initial Mastery.

Paulus said state tests are the best indicator that student achievement is improving. "But we have other major yardsticks that show gains."

Oregon learned in June that its 8th graders in 1997 scored above national and international averages on science and math tests conducted by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. In fact, of the 41 international participants, only Singapore scored significantly higher in science and only eight countries scored significantly higher in math.

Oregon 8th graders in 1996 scored well above national averages on math and science tests given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Last week the American College Testing Program announced that Oregon's 1998 graduates scored higher than the previous class on the college entrance tests. SAT scores are expected soon. For seven straight years, Oregon has led 23 states which had at least 40 percent of their students take the SAT.

Schools and districts have their results. Scores are posted on the Oregon Department of Education's web page (www.ode.state.or.us).



reach middle school. My message to schools is to see that all students take and succeed in high-level math classes."

While there was a 2 percent gain of 10th graders passing the math multiple choice test, there was a 22 percent gain on the math problem solving test. "Schools and teachers emphasized the importance of solving complex problems," said Paulus, "and it shows in our results."

The percentage of 10th graders who passed the reading and writing tests each dropped 1 percent.

Science was tested for the first time since the State Board of Education adopted content standards. Performance levels have not been set for science.

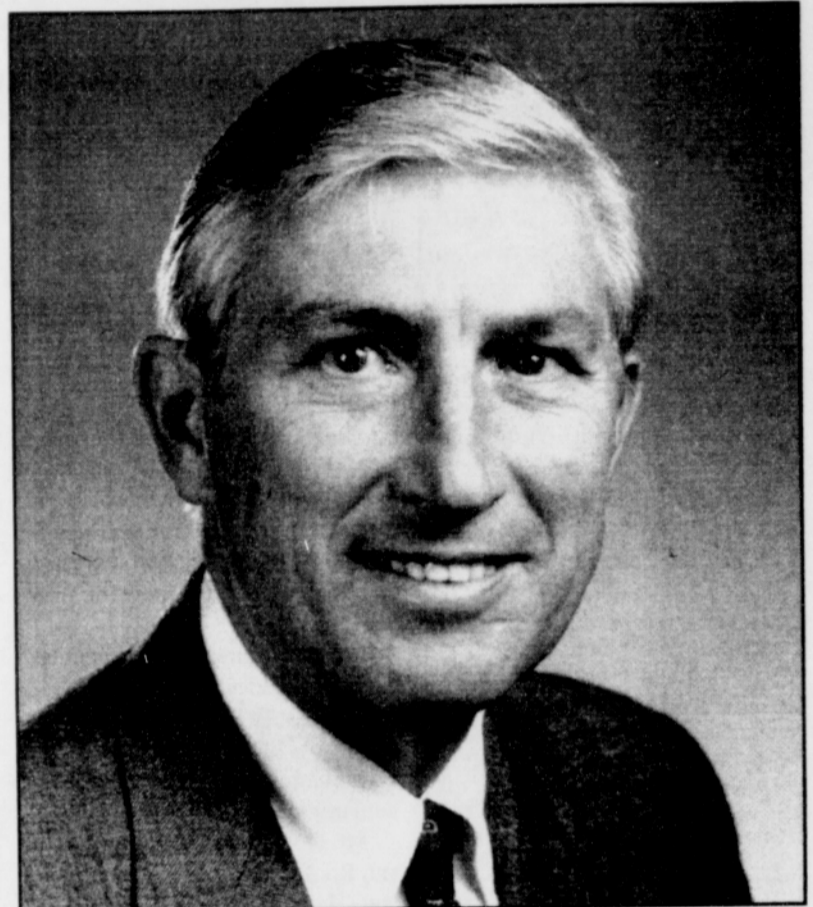
Beginning this school year, 10th graders

A Renewed Commitment to the Community, Legal and Political Affairs

Bruce Samson became the new General Counsel and Executive Director for Public Affairs for the Portland Public Schools. It is a new position that will include dealing with legal matters for the district as well as intergovernmental relations. He will also manage the Public Information Office, the Board Office and a newly created, volunteer ombudsman.

Samson's appointment was announced by Interim Superintendent Diana Snowden. He'll begin his work with the district on August 1st.

Bruce Samson has extensive experience with political affairs and creating partnerships with the community. He was most recently the Sr. Vice President of Public Affairs and General Counsel for Northwest Natural. His leadership as past president of the Portland Chamber of Commerce brought business groups into the schools and helped coordinate an effort in Salem showing the clear link between good solid schools and economic vitality.



Bruce Samson

CLASSICAL EDUCATION

BY DOUGLAS WILSON

Classical learning is called "classical" because future leaders have been trained in its methods for centuries. In fact, some parts of the classical curriculum have been around for millennia.

Classical learning follows a particular pattern called the Trivium - which consists of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric. The students learn the grammar of each subject (that subject's "particulars"). They then learn dialectic, or the relationships of these particulars to one another, and then go on to learn rhetoric. That is, they learn how to express what they have gained in an effective and coherent fashion. The purpose of following this pattern is not to teach the student everything there is to know, but rather to establish in the student a habit of mind which instinctively knows how to learn new material when the formal schooling process is only a faint memory. The student is not so much taught what to think, he is shown how to think.

As Dorothy Sayers, author of the "Lord Wimsey" mysteries and a friend of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, points out in her famous essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning," the three stages of the Trivium match the developmental stages of growing children quite nicely. The very great value of this method is that it provides a rigorous education suited to basic human nature and tested over centuries, rather than one developed from the theories of educational faddists.

Another significant part of the value of classical instruction is that it teaches students the rigors of logical analysis. We desperately need to train people to recognize it, so that someone might take it away. In short, we need more

epistemological garbage men. This requires training in logic and the apologetics of worldview thinking. Classical education supplies this in a way not seen elsewhere.

Third, the student learns that our culture and civilization is an outgrowth of

the classical, medieval, and reformation world. Modern students must learn that our culture was not purchased for them by their parents at the mall. As C.S. Lewis pointed out, by reading old books the student is protected against some of the sillier mistakes of modernity.

"The Journey From Home To School" A Mother's Perspective

BY WYNNE BOYLAN

As I sat on the back porch this evening, sipping a cup of tea, I began noticing the changes of the season. The wind was turning chill and the sun was beginning to set a little earlier. I was reminded that my nephews would soon be returning to school and Fall was on the way. As I drew on my sweat shirt and wandered through the garden, I thought back to my son's first day of school and how anxious I was to let him go. I remember thinking how fast he was growing up. He wasn't a toddler anymore. Already he was making friends in the neighborhood and beginning the gradual shift from family focus to peer focus. It was difficult to relax that first day as I said good-bye in the classroom and released him into the care of his new teacher.

I pictured myself wandering through the empty house trying to relax and distract myself with chores and projects. It was such a luxury to have time on my hands but relaxation didn't come easy. I'd been used to being hyper vigilant, one eye on my son while cooking or cleaning, pillow forts in the living room and walks to the park when the weather was nice. Being an only child, I was the entertainment committee as well.

It's interesting to note how our society marks the passing of time by the beginning and ending of each school year. We plan our vacations around this time and, once we've gotten into the rhythm of school, we look forward, as mothers, to the end of summer. We have time to ourselves as our children venture off to learn, make new friends and become social creatures. School becomes a ritual, providing a sense of stability, familiarity and community connection. It also becomes a rite of passage not only for our children but for ourselves as nurturers and caregivers. We are needed a little less each year as our children test their wings and learn how to think for themselves. If we've done our job right, we end up working ourselves out of a job (or at least a full time one).

I'm aware of late, how more and more fathers are shouldering the responsibility and moving into the role of full time caregiver. My son, who has chosen to be the main caregiver, struggles with many of the same issues of parenting that I went through.

He is nurturing and responsible with his child; my granddaughter. I get calls for advice on home remedies, how to treat a fever or suggestions on how to deal with certain behaviors. It reminds me that I am foremost and always a mother. That I will always have a place in my son's life is reassuring as I move between the roles of mother and grandmother.

Soon, my son will be faced with his daughter's first day of school. As I see the bond between them grow, I know this day will not be easy. And as this school year draws close, a new generation of parents (mothers and fathers) will be faced with the same fear and anxiety of separation that I went through.

As the ritual of school continues each year, we get to experience new levels of separation from nursery school and kindergarten to grade school, middle school, high school and college. As our children grow, separate into individuals and learn more and more about the world around them, we as parents, learn more and more about ourselves and our roles with our children. Each school year begins to take on a new level of meaning. As a woman, wife, mother and grandmother, I look forward to each new year.

Wynne Boylan, CADCI, is a chemical dependence counselor in the Portland/Vancouver area who works with individuals who are in recovery, in transition or developing their spirituality.

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FREE SCREENINGS FOR VISION AND SCHOOL

Children depend on a healthy visual system and good eye health. As a community service, the Pacific University College of Optometry Northeast Eye Center is again offering free vision screenings for infants, pre-schoolers, school-age children, and adults — just in time for the school year. Screenings provide information that is important in evaluating visual clarity, eye health, and eye coordination. Eye doctors stress the importance of regular vision care for children prior to or early in the school year. Screenings take about 30 minutes and are offered during weekends, evenings and regular business hours. As a special service, from now through October community members may receive a \$25 fee reduction on vision examinations and 25 percent off most eyewear in our Optical Shop.

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