

Making Mentors and Molding Minds

PCC students 'Gear Up' for Jefferson kids

Jefferson High School students are getting personal guidance from college students through an adult mentoring program.

Portland Community College's Gear Up Project is providing one-on-one, adult-to-student mentoring to help Jefferson kids envision "a future of possibilities, one hour per week and four hours per month."

The college volunteers cover such topics as building good study habits, searching for college scholarships, career exploration, college choice and financial aid.

The program is not just for high achieving or at-risk students, but



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jefferson High School student Munira Amme (from left) is joined by college tutors Oni Auer and Phillip Christian, along with classmate Chanesa Jackson in the Portland Community College Gear Up project which gives Jefferson kids one-on-one, adult-to-student mentoring help.

instead serves the whole student body, said Phillip Christian, assistant director of Gear Up.

The college advisors are trained and given resource materials before they are matched with one-to-10 students.

PCC received a \$2.8 million federal grant from the Department of Education to implement the five-year program, which runs until 2005.

For more information, contact the PCC Cascade Campus at 503-493-0131.

INFORMATION SESSIONS

for

Trillium Charter School

A New Portland Public K-12 Charter School

THURSDAY JANUARY 16 AT 7:00 P.M.

MONDAY JANUARY 27 AT 7:00 P.M.

AT 116 N. PAGE STREET

Trillium seeks to create an environment of independent learning within a small school, small multi-age class setting.

Learn how our focus of Community, Urban and Global Studies encourages cross-age relationships, social awareness and critical thinking.

Alternatives...Choice... Change

FOR INFORMATION AND APPLICATIONS CALL (503)285-3833 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.TRILLIUMCHARTERSCHOOL.ORG



Keeping All Eyes on the Prize

continued from Front

tation included.

This year, Jefferson has seen its lowest enrollment ever, and two full-time teachers were lost as a result of the transfers.

Some say the odds have been historically stacked against Jefferson, pointing to a trend of students transferring out because of the Desegregation Act in the 70s, gang problems plaguing north and northeast Portland in the early 90s, and the school's reconstitution of 1998, when 90 percent of the staff turned over after they were asked to reapply for their jobs.

Dashiell, a Lewis and Clark College graduate, and former Jefferson vice-principal, said that he aims to

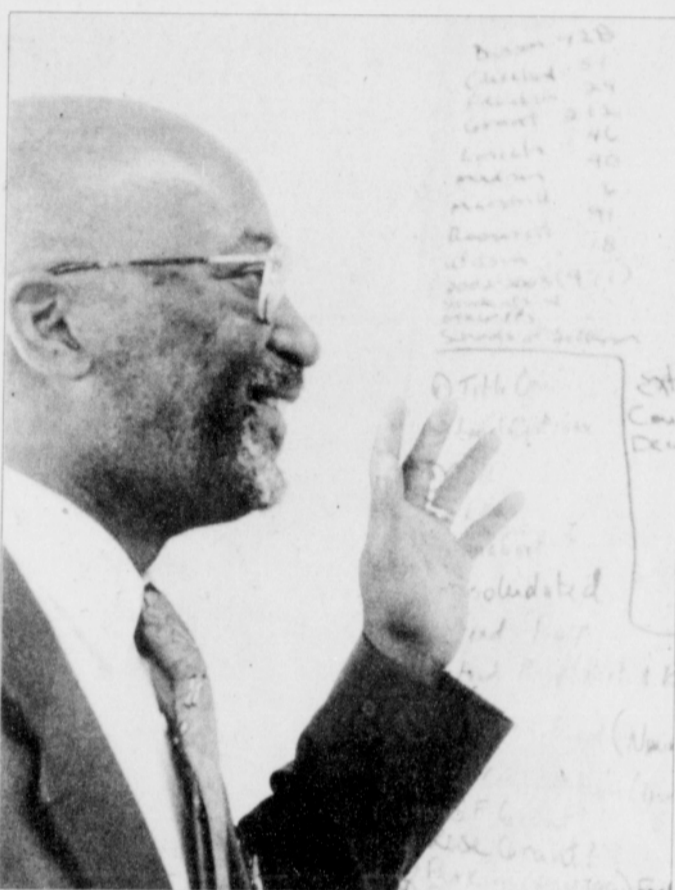


PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jefferson High School Principal Larry Dashiell points to a board that shows 971 students in Jefferson's school boundary who attend other schools in the Portland School District.

get the school off the No Child Left Behind list, and to bring a sense of stability that the students and administration have been lacking.

While students are following a stringent new reading curriculum and structured academy-style schedules, Dashiell's battle plan is to arm the educators and encourage parent, mentor and tutor involvement.

"We've been doing a great deal of staff development since August, (including) school-wide math and literacy training," he said.

Jefferson is among a group of Oregon schools fingered on the federal "failing schools" list, meaning it failed to meet its state's minimum academic standards for two years in a row.

While some critics of Portland Public Schools think the building would better serve the community as a McMenamin's brewery, supporters question how abandoning neighborhood schools will solve the problem.

"You have students who feel that this is their neighborhood school and they want to succeed here," Dashiell said. "This is the midway story. We're holding tight and working our way through. We'll see where we are at the end of the year story."

White Teachers Flee Black Schools

Trend in South called symptom of re-segregation

(AP) — Jason Johnston took a job at mostly black Midway Elementary School in Decatur, Georgia in hopes he could make a difference with the children who needed him most.

But Johnston, one of only a handful of white teachers at the school, decided to leave after less than a year, disillusioned by pupils who struggled, parents who weren't involved and the constant pressure to meet state achievement standards.

Johnston is part of an exodus of white teachers leaving black schools that some see as a troubling symptom of the re-segregation of the South.

As decades-long court busing orders are loosened or lifted, the

region's schools have become increasingly segregated. And a new study suggests that the trend is having a dramatic effect on where teachers choose to teach.

Three Georgia State University professors found that during the late '90s white elementary school teachers in Georgia were much more likely to quit at schools with higher proportions of black students.

After the 1999-2000 school year, 31 percent of white teachers quit their jobs at schools where the student population was more than 70 percent black, and those who changed jobs went to schools that served lower proportions of black and poor pupils.

Many Georgia teachers say they felt pressured to leave low-performing schools after the state passed an education reform law that tied teacher pay to test scores. Still, the study found that white teachers were leaving predominantly black

schools even in the Atlanta city and suburban DeKalb County districts that were among the state's highest paying.

"It's discouraging," said study co-author Ben Scafidi, an assistant professor of economics, public administration and urban studies. "And the most depressing part ... is our evidence suggests that even large wage increases won't help."

Elise Crisp teaches at DeKalb County's Avondale High School, where the student body is nearly 100 percent black. She has been there for six years and seen other white teachers leave for more affluent schools, with more white students.

She says some are overwhelmed by the culture shock of an all-black school; others just want to work closer to home.

But John Evans, president of the NAACP in DeKalb County, says

no one should be surprised to see young white teachers leave for the suburbs after a year or two. Many teachers, especially young women, are scared of black neighborhoods and don't want to be there after dark, he says.

Evans rejects the idea that black schools can't be successful without white teachers. If they don't want to be there, then let them go, he says.

However, there simply aren't enough black teachers to go around. Only 20 percent of Georgia teachers are black, but black students make up 40 percent of the public school population.

That means high teacher turnover at black schools, which hurts the quality of instruction, Scafidi says. Schools that have a lot of teaching positions to fill every year can't be as selective. They also wind up with more inexperienced teachers.

Schools Transfer Deadline Extended

Time given to consider fate of tax measure

Portland Public Schools have extended a transfer process until March 31 for elementary and middle

school students wishing to transfer to other schools for the 2003-04 school year.

School officials said every effort will be made to give families one of their choices for transfer, but it may not be possible due to limited space in certain programs and schools.

A lottery will be used for families wanting to enroll in schools and programs that have more applicants than space available, replacing the former first come, first served waiting list.

The change in policy was made because of the uncertainty of the

income tax measure facing voters on Jan. 28, school officials said.

Depending on the outcome, families who might not otherwise have requested a transfer may want to take advantage of the process and should be given the same options for school choice, officials said.

New Governor's Budget Cuts Community Colleges

A proposed budget by newly elected Gov. Ted Kulongoski would bring new budget reductions at Mt. Hood and other community college.

The governor's proposed budget includes a \$48 million

dollar reduction in funding to Oregon community colleges for 2003-2005.

"This is very disappointing news," said Mt. Hood Community College President Robert Silverman. "This leaves us no choice but to

continue on a path that will result in the elimination of more positions and further reductions in classes and programs."

Budget reduction efforts at MHCC have already included a freeze on hiring in which over 30

positions have gone unfilled, the elimination of several administrative positions, a salary reduction taken by administrators, supervisors and confidential personnel, a reduction in class offerings and increases in tuition.

THE PULLMAN PORTER LEGACY EXTENDS MUCH FURTHER THAN THE RAILROAD.

Respected as prime examples of Black success, not only were Pullman Porters role models for young men and women, they were role models for an entire race.

Hats off to the men with the proud, straight posture, immaculate blue uniforms and flawlessly shined black shoes. Thank you for showing the world how self-discipline and pride are what really pave the road to a great future.

American Family Insurance is proud to be part of helping protect the things that matter... even precious memories.

AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE
All Your Protection Under One Roof.

© 2003 American Family Mutual Insurance Company and its Subsidiaries
Home Office - Madison, WI 53783 www.aflfam.com