

# Hundreds of Students Leave Area Schools Under New Law

Whitaker, Jefferson, Marshall and Roosevelt suffer

(AP) — More than 800 students have left four underperforming schools in north, northeast and southeast Portland for higher achieving classrooms this fall under the federal No Child Left Behind law.

The shrinking enrollments threaten to close the schools impacted rather than save them.

Under the law, Roosevelt, Jefferson and Marshall high schools and Whitaker Middle School have to give students free bus passes to attend higher performing schools.

"I want to graduate from a school with higher standards," said DeAngela Venable, who left Portland's Roosevelt High for Grant High last year.

In Portland, years of low test scores put the four schools on the list. At Roosevelt, for example, test scores have been rated unacceptable by the state for three years running. This year, one in four sophomores met state benchmarks in reading,

writing and math, and 57 percent of freshmen graduated in four years.

Portland educators say all four schools hit by sanctions are using research-based approaches to try to raise achievement. The schools cannot get better, they say, if enrollments are allowed to plummet, taking away teachers and resources.



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"The critical issue is to make sure all schools have a rigorous curriculum," said Lorenzo Poe, co-chairman of the Portland School Board.

Official enrollment figures at all schools won't be tallied until next month. But the 670 students who transferred out of the three high schools this fall represent almost as many students as those who

entered the schools as freshmen last fall.

Portland educators fear that by allowing enrollment at the struggling schools to plunge because of transfers, the federal law will undermine efforts to improve those schools.

Whitaker Middle School, situated at a temporary site on Northeast Columbia Boulevard after the main school campus was closed a couple of years ago because of poor building maintenance, for instance, has launched the first phase of a \$300,000, three-year effort to overhaul the school.

But Principal Lynn Buedefeldt reported that Whitaker was at 352 students last week. She expected 440. The school stands to lose teachers if enrollment doesn't pick up next year.

The district says 148 students in the Whitaker neighborhood were granted transfers to other middle schools this year. Some of the no-shows moved out of the Portland district, while others transferred to other city schools, Buedefeldt said.

"Will I be able to maintain all the programs if my number doesn't go up?" she said. "No."

## PTA Sponsors Conversation

The Jefferson High School PTA will hold a community conversation regarding the "Leave No Child Behind" law in the school cafeteria on Monday, Sept. 22 beginning at 6 p.m. with light snacks. The discussion will start at 6:30 p.m.

Families are encouraged to find out how the federal law will affect their children, their schools and teachers. Experts from the Portland Public School District and the Oregon Department of Education will make brief presentations and answer questions.

People attending the meeting are encouraged to bring clothes for the

PTA Clothes Closet, a project that has provided clothing for children from low-income families for 40 years. Clean, in-style clothes that don't need repair, including used coats, warm hats and gloves, jeans, pants and leggings, gym and play clothes, sleepwear, belts, backpacks, and lunch boxes are requested. Also needed are new underwear and socks.

To sign up for babysitting and light snacks or for more information, call the Jefferson High School PTA Hotline at 503-299-4490.

## Grant Launches Job Training Effort

Portland Community College has announced a nine-month, \$34,484 grant to pilot a new training program at PCC's Metropolitan Workforce Training Center. The college will provide training and job placement to help participants secure living-wage jobs with benefits and the opportunity to advance.

The program, called Keys to Customer Service, will provide 60 north and northeast Portland residents with skill assessments; four weeks of classroom training in customer service; four weeks of work experience through internships; the opportunity to earn certification in customer service; and job placement services.

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— Pamela Murray, director of Workforce Development for PCC

"Local employers have identified a need for job applicants and employees with strong customer service skills," said Pamela Murray, director of Workforce Development for PCC. "The skills that will be learned in this training are essential to providing good service in all industries."

The college will partner with four businesses in the Enterprise Zone: Legacy Health Systems, Target, Kroger, Swan Island Dairy and Safeway.

"Each business has committed to interviewing and hiring qualified candidates from the training," said Murray. For more information, contact Murray at 503-943-2266.

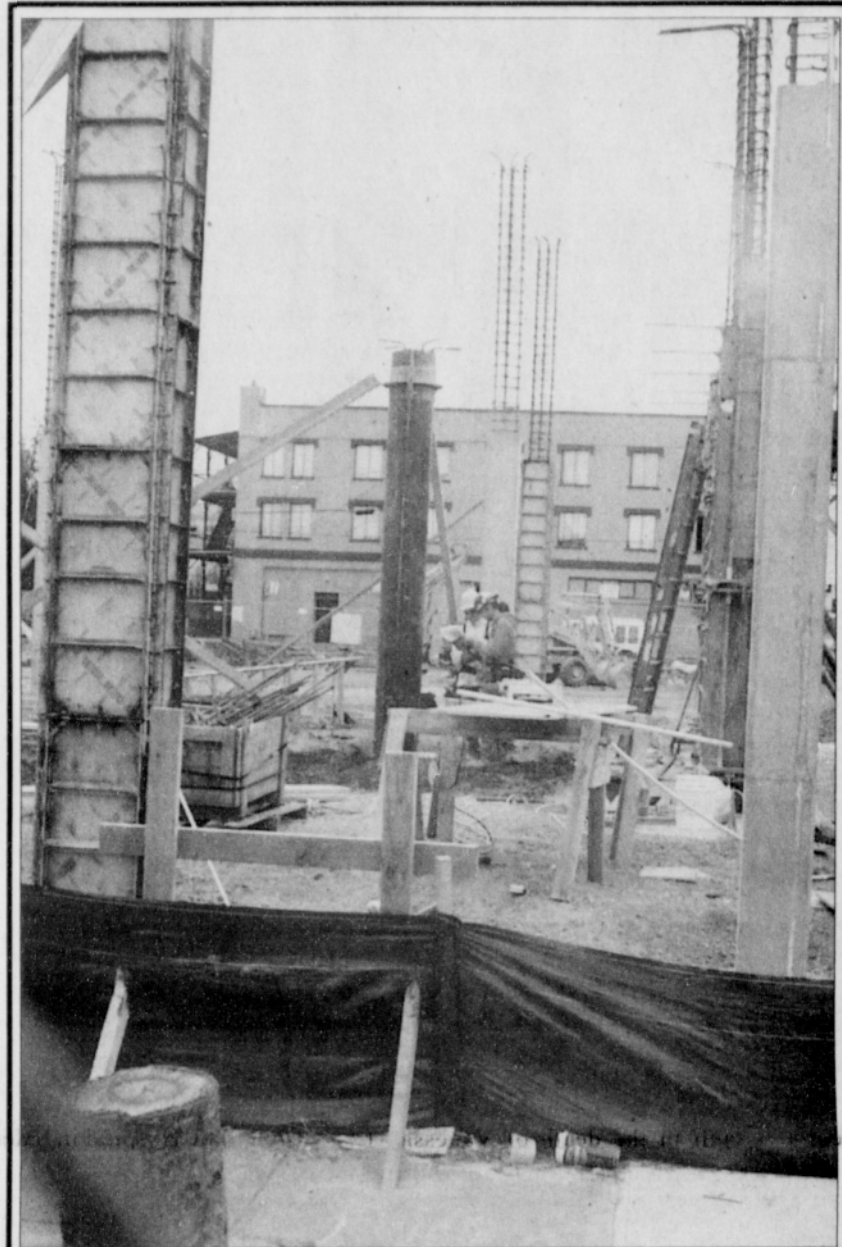


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## PCC Cascade Builds

A major expansion project is underway at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus. This structure, the physical education complex across the street from the main campus on North Killingsworth, is part of the 120,000 square foot expansion paid for by a \$56 million bond approved two years ago. The project began as a response to Cascade's 55 percent enrollment growth in the last five years.

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## Parkrose Students Suspended

A series of racially charged fights has resulted in the suspension of 18 Parkrose High School students and more students could be suspended from the northeast Portland school, according to Principal Roy Reynolds.

A fight reportedly began off-campus Friday during the school's lunch hour after racial comments were exchanged between Asian and African American students. When the students returned to school, fights continued, eventually involving white students on both sides. No weapons were involved in the altercations.

Parkrose school officials said they're taking steps to keep that kind of dispute from happening again.

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