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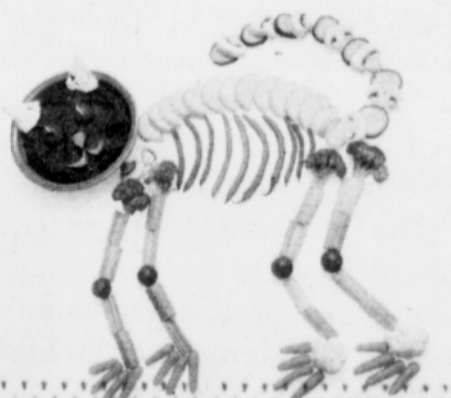


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What's on your list today?.

LOCAL NEWS

Marshall Closure Eminent

Benson, Jefferson brace for new focus

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

With extra tight budgets for Oregon in the upcoming years, the Portland School Board was prepared to take action Tuesday night on changes to its high school system, including the closure of the Marshall High in southeast Portland, with intention to consolidate and strengthen the remaining schools.

Superintendent, Carole Smith presented an updated plan for Portland's public high schools to the board two weeks ago and the district held a work session and took public testimony at Marshall last Wednesday.

Existing academies on the Marshall campus -- BizTech, Pauling, and Renaissance Arts -- would close after the current school year, and the high school program at the Harriet Tubman Leadership Academy for Young Women in north Portland would discontinue, leaving a stand-alone focus middle school.

Cleveland, Franklin, Grant, Lincoln, Madison, Roosevelt and Wilson would continue normal operation as community comprehensive



Marshall High School in southeast Portland.

schools with neighborhood boundaries and well-rounded high school programs, while Benson, Jefferson, and existing charter schools would serve as focus schools, open to students from across the school district.

Students leaving Marshall would likely receive education at Madison, Franklin or Cleveland.

Smith's vision was drawn from the harsh reality of budget reductions presenting the dilemma of keeping all the high schools alive, but at a subpar level and hoping to build them back sometime in the future or consolidating them now and strengthening a common core of programming.

Though the school board faces difficult challenges, the students, teachers, and parents of the Marshall community are not about to let their school be closed in silence.

Last Wednesday in the Marshall auditorium, the school

board sat and listened as students showed up with the all the school spirit they could muster, waving signs that read "Save Marshall" and testifying in support of what they called amazing teachers. Teachers and parents spoke of success stories, pleading to keep the school as a much needed support system to Marshall's predominately low-income students.

At the top of concern for Marshall supporters was how their students will fare in other schools that lack the specialized programs that found success at Marshall. Examples were a Marshall day care for teen parents, a full time nurse, an association for homeless students, and an after-school tutoring and enrichment program.

Board members watched with difficulty hours of inspiring persuasion from the Marshall community who will without a doubt, lose their school unless the school district decides otherwise.

Schools Make Grade, with Exceptions

Forty-four percent of Portland Public Schools earned the top of grade of "outstanding" on a new report card on Oregon schools. Overall, 92 percent of the Portland School District's rated schools earned "satisfactory" or better.

Based on how students performed on the state's standardized tests, improvement from previous years and graduation rates, schools are assigned one of three labels: outstanding, satisfactory or in need of improvement.

"Beyond the overall grade, these report cards offer families a good look at some of the vital achievement data in every school," said Superintendent Carole Smith. "Many students in our district do incredibly well - but we are not ensuring success for all of our students, particularly among students of color and those living in poverty.

Five schools did improve; BizTech and Re-

naissance Arts Academy on the Marshall Campus moved from "in need of improvement" to "satisfactory," and Hayhurst Elementary, Trilium Charter School and Wilson High School moved from "satisfactory" to "outstanding."

Six schools declined this year: CM2 Opal Charter School, Grant High School, Sabin K-8 and Whitman Elementary moved from "outstanding" to "satisfactory."

Jefferson High School and POWER Academy on the Roosevelt Campus slid from "satisfactory" to "in need of improvement." Also rated "in need of improvement" were: LEP Charter School, rated for the first time this year, and the three small schools on the Roosevelt Campus, which is benefiting from a \$7.7 million federal grant to provide greater support and improve results at the north Portland school.