

# RATES: Recent grant to create Pendleton Technology and Trades Center should help graduation numbers

Continued from 1A

created by the fact that a single student's failure to graduate represents several percentage points in the graduation rate. "You really have to look at it over a five-year period," he said.

Morrow County's rate went from 83 percent to 74, staying in line with the state average of 74 percent. Dirksen said 11 of the students who did not graduate with their class are still in school working toward a diploma.

He said he was pleased to see that several subgroups that are traditionally under-served — including special education students, English language learners and economically disadvantaged students — were graduating from Morrow County School District at levels well above the state average for those same groups.

Still, he said, there was always more work to be done.

"I'm never going to be pleased completely until we're at 100 percent," he said.

The "graduation rate" most talked about each year is the four-year cohort rate, which counts the number of students who received a regular diploma within four years of starting high school. But the state report also measures graduation rates in other ways. A five-year cohort rate includes students who took an extra year to finish school, while five-year and four-year "completer" rates add in students who earned a GED or modified diploma.

The state's report also breaks graduation rates down by school and by subgroup, including gender, race, disability, economic status, English proficiency, talented and gifted status and whether the student is considered a migrant.

One of the districts that did increase the number of students graduating with a regular diploma after four years was Pendleton School District.

Assistant superintendent Tricia Mooney said the district was happy to see the increase from 72 percent to 75.

"We did see improvements in graduation rates and we're excited about that," she said. "It's the result of hard work by staff and students."

She said the district would continue to work to improve the rate. One promising development is a recent grant to create the Pendleton Technology and Trades Center at West Hills School, which Mooney said would be another tool for helping keep students engaged in their education. Another is a grant for the Tribal Attendance Pilot Program, where the district will work in conjunction with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to reduce absenteeism for Native American students.

Hermiston School District's four-year graduation rate went from 68 percent in 2013-2014 to 64 percent last year.

The numbers looked much better for Hermiston High School, which graduated 87 percent of the class of 2015 on time with a regular diploma. But the Innovative Learning Center — the district's alternative school for students struggling with the structure of Hermiston High School — had a four-year cohort rate of 8 percent. Reflecting the nature of alternative schools, however, 48 percent of Innovative Learning Center students did earn a GED or diploma after five years of high school.

That figure, along with Hermiston High School students who took an extra year to graduate or earned a

## Graduation rates

	4 Years		5 Years
	2015	2014	2015
Umatilla:	65	67	70
M-F:	74	77	83
Morrow Co.:	74	83	85
Stanfield:	82	79	84
Pilot Rock:	79	96	96
Echo:	88	95	100
Helix:	80	100	100
Ukiah:	100	100	100
A-W:	88	88	90
Ione:	94	88	88

Four-year: Graduated on time with a regular diploma  
Five-year: Earn a diploma, modified diploma or GED within five years of starting high school

GED, bumps Hermiston School District's five-year completer rate up to 78 percent, just below Pendleton's 79 percent and Oregon's 82 percent.

At the state level, leaders applauded the statewide increase of on-time graduations from 72 percent to 74.

"While our graduation rate is far from where we want and need it to be, this increase means we are headed in the right direction and is truly something to celebrate," Deputy Superintendent Salam Noor said in a statement.

To help increase graduation rates further, Gov. Kate Brown recently announced the creation of an "education innovation officer" position. The officer will be tasked with traveling around the state to gather information on what is working to increase graduation rates and spreading that information to other school districts.

To read the full data set on each school district's graduation rates, visit [www.ode.state.or.us](http://www.ode.state.or.us).

# STANDOFF: Troopers involved in shooting have been placed on leave

Continued from 1A

who were apprehended, and the Bundys will be back in court next week.

Bundy and his followers took over the refuge Jan. 2 to demand that the federal government turn public lands over to local control. They have complained about what they say are onerous federal rules governing grazing and mining rights across the West.

Court documents detail some of the evidence against the occupiers, including a memorandum filed by prosecutors Friday arguing against releasing defendants before trial.

"As the armed group's unrepentant leader, he (Ammon Bundy) has consistently and publicly expressed support for an armed occupation that has endangered, and continues to endanger, many people," the document states.

A criminal complaint filed earlier in this week makes reference to an online video that showed Bundy saying the group planned to stay for several years. He called on people to "come out here and stand," adding: "We need you to bring your arms."

A video posted Jan. 4 showed another defendant, Jon Ritzheimer, saying he was "100 percent willing to lay my life down."

In a video posted a day later, Ritzheimer talked about Robert "LaVoy" Finicum and other occupiers taking up a "defensive posture" at the refuge against a feared FBI raid.

"Right now underneath the tarp right there — LaVoy Finicum is sitting underneath the tarp, and he's not going to let them come through," Ritzheimer said in the video.

That raid never came. Finicum was killed

Tuesday night in a confrontation with the FBI and Oregon State Police on a remote road. Bundy and four others were arrested during the encounter, and more followers were taken into custody by the next day.

At one point, a couple of dozen ranchers and other protesters were holed up at the refuge, but they began clearing out after the arrests and killing.

The FBI on Thursday released a video showing Finicum's death, to counter claims he did nothing to provoke his killing.

In the aerial video, Finicum is pulled over in his white truck but then takes off in the vehicle and plows into a snowbank because of a roadblock. He gets out of his truck and has his hands up at first, then reaches toward his jacket pocket at least twice. He is shot and falls to the snow.

The FBI said a loaded handgun was found in the pocket.

An undisclosed number of state troopers involved in the shooting have been placed on leave pending an investigation, which is standard procedure.

The charges against the defendants say the refuge's 16 employees have been prevented from reporting to work because of threats of violence.

Ammon Bundy is the son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a tense 2014 standoff with the government over grazing rights. The younger Bundy's lawyer said he "is not an anarchist; he believes in government."

Judge Beckerman said at the Friday hearing: "I'm not worried about him leaving the country; I'm worried about him occupying another government building."

# GRADUATE: Taking college classes online from U of Phoenix

Continued from 1A

Scott Depew would try and convince her to come back.

"Mr. Depew kept getting on me," she said. "I probably would have just gotten a GED but he didn't want that."

Teachers, counselors and even the parents of friends she grew up with would see her around town and chat with her about why she wasn't in class. It's the blessing and the curse of living in a small town — everyone knows who you are, so there's no slipping through the cracks.

Up until the second semester of her sophomore year, Gregerson seemed on track to graduate. But after she lost her brother in an accident, the rest of the year was "kind of crazy," she said. She just didn't want to go to school most days, and often she didn't.

Her junior year she attended more regularly, but she was pregnant for most of the year, adding stresses that most teenagers don't understand. Gregerson said out of all of her high school friends, the one she still spends the most time with had a baby around the same time she did. Other friends just aren't in the same place in their life.

"A lot of them are still being kids," she said.

She had her first son two and a half weeks before the start of her senior year. With the support of her parents and her boyfriend, who was 19 and already graduated from high school, she tried going back to school but decided it was too hard leaving her newborn behind every day.

"I went for the first two weeks and I just couldn't do it," she said.

A few months later she went back to school. Then she got pregnant again, so she started taking online classes through Umatilla High School.

In May 2014 she finally had a high school diploma just weeks before her 21st birthday.

Today she is taking college classes online from the University of Phoenix while she takes care of her three sons, ages five, two and nine months. She regularly volunteers in her oldest son's kindergarten classroom. Her fiancé Steven Williams, who she has dated since she was 15, works full-time to support the family while also taking classes online. She wants to be an elementary school teacher and he wants to teach high school.

The support of her family, Williams and Umatilla School District staff helped her see how important education is and helped her push through even when it was tough, she said.

**"In the moment it doesn't seem important but it is. In the moment it's really easy to say 'I'm done, I don't want to do it,' but I'm glad I went back."**

— Chevelle Gregerson, high school graduate

"In the moment it doesn't seem important but it is," she said. "In the moment it's really easy to say 'I'm done, I don't want to do it,' but I'm glad I went back."

It's stories like Gregerson's that Sipe said inspires her and the rest of Umatilla School District's staff to work with students to finish their diploma, which can present more opportunities for college and employment than a GED. Although the state allows students to stay in school until age 21, Sipe said not all high schools are open to allowing students to continue attending taking classes after their fifth year.

She said every year Umatilla School District has a handful of students who, for various reasons, need more than five years to earn a diploma.

"Every student's path is different," she said.

She said currently the district has 10 students who will likely earn a diploma but not count toward the district's graduation rate, and in a school district the size of Umatilla each student counts

toward just under 1 percent of the graduation rate.

It's frustrating sometimes when the number that ends up in the newspaper or on the state's website makes the drop-out rate seem higher than it is, she said. But at the same time, she isn't going to deny that it would be better if those students had graduated in the four-year or five-year cohort.

"We didn't graduate those kids in four years," she said. "That didn't happen. That's accurate data and it's one of those pieces that we have to own that and try to improve."

To do that, she said the district goes through every student who didn't graduate in four years and discusses why they faltered and if there were more resources they could have been offered. She said the "vast majority" of their education struggles are tied to family problems like needing to care for a sick parent or support a child.

For students raising a child, she said the district has numerous support mechanisms, including a bus that will pick them and their child up and drop their child off

at Head Start before taking them to the high school.

"We have a huge success rate with teen parents and getting them through graduation," she said. "We help them understand that graduation is no longer a choice, it's absolutely a requirement because they have a young life depending on them now."

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

### Concealed Carry Permit Class

Qualify for OR, UT & AZ CCP

Permits valid in 33+ states!

February 15 - Quality Inn, Umatilla, OR  
February 16 - Oxford Suites, Pendleton, OR

Contact us at (724)-376-2373 or [www.concealedcarryusa.us](http://www.concealedcarryusa.us) for more info or to REGISTER

## LET US "MEAT" YOUR NEEDS

**Box includes:**

- 2 T-Bones Steaks
- 2 Rib Steaks
- 2 New York Steaks
- 2 Top Sirloin
- 1 - 3-4 lb. Boneless Chuck Roast
- 5 - 1 lb. Pkg Lean Ground Beef

\$100

(Reg. \$125)

**Sampler Box**

**E.O.M.S. EASTERN OREGON MOBILE SLAUGHTER**

541-567-2011  
253 W. Hermiston Ave., Hermiston

### ASK ABOUT OUR FIRST TIME BUYER PROGRAM!



**NEW 2016 COROLLA LE**

\$245 MO FOR 36 MONTHS

ON APPROVED CREDIT

**\$0 DOWN!**

STK# 16T071. MSRP \$19,804. \$18,541 AFTER \$1,000 TFS REBATE. GFU \$12,675. 36 MO LEASE/12000 MILES PER YEAR LEASE = \$245 MO PLUS TTD AND ON APPROVED CREDIT.



**NEW 2016 CAMRY LE**

\$268 MO FOR 36 MONTHS

ON APPROVED CREDIT

**\$0 DOWN!**

STK# 16T032. MSRP \$24,130. SALE PRICE \$22,639 AFTER \$1,250 TFS REBATE. GFU \$14,468. 36 MO LEASE/12000 MILES PER YEAR LEASE = \$268 MO PLUS TTD AND ON APPROVED CREDIT.



**NEW 2016 TACOMA SR5 DOUBLE CAB**

\$399 MO FOR 36 MONTHS

ON APPROVED CREDIT

**\$0 DOWN!**

STK# 16T191. MSRP \$34,139. GFU \$24,580. 36 MO LEASE/12000 MILES PER YEAR LEASE = \$399 MO PLUS TTD AND ON APPROVED CREDIT.



**NEW 2015 VENZA LIMITED AWD**

\$36,283 PLUS TTD

ONLY 1 LEFT!

STK# 15T435. MSRP \$41,180.

FOR ALL OFFERS, NO SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIRED, ON APPROVED CREDIT. A DOCUMENTARY SERVICE FEE OF \$150 MAY BE ADDED TO VEHICLE PRICE OR CAPITALIZED COST. DOES NOT INCLUDE TAXES, LICENSE, TITLE, PROCESSING FEES, INSURANCE AND DEALER CHARGES. SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. OFFERS VALID THROUGH 1-31-16.

**NO COST MAINTENANCE ON ALL NEW TOYOTAS • 2 YEARS OR 25,000 MILES • 24/7 ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE**



541.567.6461 | 1.800.522.2308

1550 N 1ST ST., HERMISTON, OR

[toyotaofhermiston.com](http://toyotaofhermiston.com)

SERVICE HOURS: MON-FRI 7 am - 5:30 pm SAT 8 am - 5 pm SALES HOURS: MON-SAT 8:30 am - 7 pm SUN 10 am - 6 pm