

## PENDLETON: Umatilla School District also saw growth

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with families on getting them to school. At the subgroup level, the district saw a marked improvement in its American Indian graduation rate — an area the district has targeted for the past few years.

The graduation rate for those students jumped from 55.6 percent in 2014-2015 to 78.1 percent at the end of 2016.

Despite the boost, American Indian students still lagged behind their white peers, who graduated at a 86.9 percent clip.

Although Pendleton has made specific efforts to make the district more culturally inclusive, Yoshioka said it would take time to see if the American Indian grad rate rise is sustainable.

“You hope it’s not an anomaly and hope it’s more of a trend,” he said.

Pendleton wasn’t the only local district that saw higher grad rates — the Umatilla (64.7 percent to 72.2 percent) and Morrow County (73.9 percent to 85.1 percent) school districts also saw substantial growth.

Umatilla superintendent Heidi Sipe said her district is starting to see payoff for its career technical education efforts.

Sipe said the district’s renewed focus on CTE has allowed teachers and administrators to keep students who are interested in vocational programs engaged in school and on the path to graduation.

“We didn’t want to value that any less than a traditional four-year college experience,” she said. “They’re working toward a productive future and we support that.”

Sipe said some students now take the ACT WorkKeys exam instead of the Smarter Balanced assessment, where they can apply the lessons they learned in their vocational classes.

Sipe said Umatilla High School students are also completing more college-credit hours than they have in the past.

She said staff plan to continue dedicating resources toward their current



Pendleton’s graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was 83.9 percent, a significant improvement from 74.5 percent in 2014-2015. EO file photo

efforts and expects the class of 2017’s graduation rate will rise even further.

Morrow County superintendent Dirk Dirksen said it’s difficult to say any single factor helped the district improve its graduation importance, but he did laud Morrow County’s “wrap-around” initiatives as being beneficial.

Dirksen said Morrow County has partnered with other organizations to offer more school resource officers, counselors and other officials who work directly with students.

Dirksen said the intent of adding these new figures was to get as many adults involved with student lives as possible.

“I know the Number 1 thing (with student success) is a connection with an adult,” he said.

In the longterm, Dirksen said Morrow County will continue to dedicate time and energy toward its early education program with the hope that it will pay dividends in high school.

He added that the district wouldn’t be satisfied until Morrow County consistently produced between 95 percent and 100 percent graduation rates.

Stanfield’s graduation rate for the

past school year was 85.3 percent, an improvement from its previous year’s 82.2 percent. Superintendent Shelley Liscom said while the staff does a good job working individually with students, they want to meet the needs of all their kids. In a graduating class that’s fairly small, Liscom said she hopes to work on catching up those few that don’t graduate.

“Fifteen percent of our class — we’re still not meeting the needs of (several) kids,” she said. “We really are striving for every student to graduate, and finish high school with a plan for after high school that they implement.”

Echo School District’s graduation rate was 84.6 percent, a slight drop from 87.5. Like Stanfield, Echo’s superintendent Raymon Smith said numbers are easily skewed with such small classes.

“Those just look at four-year graduation rates,” Smith said. “If you look at fifth-year completions or summer graduations, it’s closer to 100 percent.”

Smith said he’s happy that the school’s small size allows teachers to maintain an individual relationship with students, which he feels helps with a higher graduation rate.

## HERMISTON: All students receive academic intervention if they are not at the level they need to be

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years, included students registered at the district’s online program, taking alternative courses of study or working toward a GED or modified diploma. Though that program will no longer operate through the district, the online program will still be available to all grade levels.

As of this school year, Browning said, those students will no longer be counted as separate from Hermiston High School.

“The point of (the center) was that it was a place for students unlikely to meet graduation requirements in a standard instructional day,” Browning said. “We found out from the Oregon Department of Education that we can have the same students as part of Hermiston High School.”

Browning said rates were low at the center because graduation was not the goal for all students there.

“The focus for all Innovative Learning Center students was not always a high school diploma,” Browning said. “It could be a modified diploma or an extended diploma or a GED.”

In addition to the overall rates for each school and district, the ODE report breaks down graduation data into various subcate-

gories such as gender, race or ethnicity, and economic status.

Browning said the district is always keeping an eye on certain subgroups, such as economically disadvantaged students and underserved races and ethnicities.

The district’s elementary schools, she said, all receive Title I funding, which is aimed at schools with high populations of poverty.

“We concentrate those resources on the elementary schools,” Browning said. “Research shows early learning is the best place to catch those kids.”

She added that all students receive academic intervention if they’re not at the level they need to be.

Browning said that some categories for graduation rates change every year, making it difficult to compare rates over time. But she said the general graduation rate for Hermiston High School has gradually improved for the past several years.

Browning said while the district doesn’t set a specific goal for graduation rates each year, they expect the percentage of students graduating to increase every year.

“We hold the school district’s goal that all of our students will continue to improve,” she said.

## TIME: Hermiston pushed graduation back several days

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Department of Education.

Kim Sordyl, Secretary of State Dennis Richardson’s new designee to the Board of Education, said the board should not count time missed for inclement weather as instructional time.

“We are already at the lowest in the country in terms of instructional time, and I don’t want you to easily give up that precious time,” Sordyl said, before a unanimous vote in favor of the temporary rule. Sordyl does not have a vote on the board.

Board of Education member Jerry Colonna said the temporary rule provides relief to districts that had different situations during the storms.

“This is one of those things where we want to be helpful instead of just compliance monitors,” Colonna said. “I resist the leap that this says we do not honor instructional time. I think we honor the differences around the state, and we want to be helpful in them being successful in what they want to do.”

The rule is effective only for this school year and requires school districts to receive approval at a public meeting of their local school board and to provide a written request to the Oregon Department of Education, explaining why

they cannot meet the minimum standard for instructional time.

“It’s not enough to solve the problem so school districts still will be required to add back days to comply with the minimum instructional time,” said Emily Nazarov, an ODE operations policy analyst.

Some school districts, such as Beaverton, shuttered schools for nearly two weeks. Others, such as Hermiston, have pushed back their graduation date by several days to make up missed time, according to officials in those districts.

“We were just notified that Portland Public Schools is considering holding school during Spring break and Saturdays and extending school days to make up the time,” Noor said.

Until 2015 the 14-hour waiver had been regularly available to schools to make up time for missed days due to inclement weather. That year, the Board of Education nixed the provision in order to protect instructional time, which is among the lowest amount required nationwide.

Schools are required to provide at least 900 hours of instruction annually to elementary and middle school pupils and 990 hours to high school students, except seniors who need only 966.

## UMATILLA: Did not schedule any further executive sessions

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University.

Breyer State University is an online school not accredited by the U.S. Department of Education.

The university did not return a request for information about its degrees, but information on the current website and archived versions from 2001 shows an executive leadership degree offered but does not specifically list civil engineering. However, the website advertised a program where students can design their own degree through a “learning contract” with faculty members, which could include credits for work and life experience.

Trott also told the *East Oregonian* on Monday he had concerns about the way Pelleberg had handled a disciplinary letter to city planner Bill Searles. On Thursday he said Searles had also submitted a formal grievance against Pelleberg to the city’s human resources department. When asked about the grievance,

Searles declined to discuss it until the city council had a chance to consider it.

Pelleberg said he had no comment for the newspaper other than to note that the city council did not feel it necessary to take any action or make any public comments after Wednesday’s meeting. The council also did not schedule any further executive sessions.

Since becoming city manager Pelleberg has worked on a number of revitalization efforts. In previous interviews with the *East Oregonian* he has discussed writing a master parks plan, designing possible new or expanded city parks, interviewing downtown business owners and landlords about ways the city can help with economic development, planning to hire an economic development consultant and planning to create a new community development department.

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## Iowa diesel spill is largest in U.S. since 2010

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Workers were expected to complete cleaning up Thursday about 140,000 gallons of diesel fuel that spewed from a broken pipeline onto an Iowa farm, the largest U.S. diesel spill since 2010, federal authorities said.

Vacuum trucks were sucking up the fuel that spilled onto an acre of grass and tilled farmland when the pipeline broke.

About 18 percent of the liquid had been removed, and no fuel entered rivers or streams, Iowa Department of Natural Resources spokesman Jeff Vansteenburgh early on Thursday. No farm field drain lines have been severed so fuel can’t flow into waterways, he said.

Contaminated snow and diesel are being hauled to a Minneapolis, Minnesota, facility. Contaminated soil will be excavated and taken to a landfill near Clear Lake, Iowa, Vansteenburgh said.

High wind and blowing snow were complicating cleanup efforts, he said.

The pipeline, owned by Tulsa, Oklahoma-based Magellan Midstream Partners, was discovered spewing diesel fuel Wednesday morning.

More than 70 Magellan representatives, local responders, regulators and contractors were on site Thursday morning, Magellan spokesman Bruce Heine said. No injuries were reported and no evacuations needed. He said the cause of the leak is under investigation.

“Although we expect to begin pipeline repairs later today, we do not have an estimate when pipeline operations will resume on the affected segment of our system,” Heine said on Thursday. “We do not expect this incident to disrupt supply of gasoline, diesel and other refined petroleum products in the region.”

The pipeline was built in the early 1950s, but Heine said the age of a pipeline is not a safety factor when it’s adequately inspected and maintained.

The 127-mile stretch of pipe runs from Rosemount, Minnesota to Mason City, Iowa.

The incident is the sixth largest



Crews work Thursday to clean up a diesel fuel spill after a pipeline owned by Magellan Midstream Partners broke on Wednesday. Chris Zoeller /Globe-Gazette via AP

**“We do not expect this incident to disrupt supply of gasoline, diesel and other refined petroleum products in the region.”**

— Bruce Heine, Magellan spokesman

refined petroleum spill reported by companies to the U.S. Department of Transportation this decade and the largest diesel spill since January 2010, according to the department’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration records.

During that time 807s spill have been reported causing \$342 million in estimated property damage releasing more than 3 million gallons of gas, diesel fuel and other petroleum products.

Magellan, which has nearly 11,000 miles of hazardous liquid pipelines, has had 218 accidents causing more than \$48 million in property damage since 2006. Those accidents spilled more than 832,000 gallons of petroleum products.

Over the past decade, Magellan had 40 enforcement cases against it for pipeline safety violations, resulting in \$1.4 million in proposed penalties.

The farm site is located three miles north and one mile east of Hanlontown, which is 124 miles north of Des Moines.

The incident illustrates that petroleum pipelines are dangerous, said pipeline critic Ed Fallon, director of Bold Iowa, a coalition fighting the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipeline projects.

The leak comes at a time when President Donald Trump has vowed to renew construction on both of those massive pipeline projects, which have been held up by government regulators after vigorous protests from environmentalists and Native American groups.

“We’ve been saying all along it’s not a question of if a pipeline will leak, it’s a question of when and where and how bad it will be,” Fallon said.

Federal government data shows Iowa had 13 serious pipeline incidents with one fatality and 16 injuries between 1996 and 2015. Serious incidents include a fatality or injury requiring in-patient hospitalization.

## Proposal would establish California as separate nation

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Another attempt is underway to establish California as a separate nation.

Election officials announced Thursday that a proposal has been submitted to the Secretary of State’s Office that would ask voters to repeal part of the state constitution that declares California an inseparable part of the United States.

If the proposal qualifies for the ballot and is approved by voters, it could be a step to a future vote on whether California should break away from the U.S.

Secretary of State Alex Padilla said the group behind the proposal, Yes California Independence

Campaign, was cleared to begin attempting to collect nearly 600,000 voter signatures needed to place the plan on the ballot.

Similar attempts to establish California as a nation, or break it into multiple states, have failed.

The election of President Donald Trump in November rekindled talk of California seceding from the union. The proposal makes no mention of Trump, who was trounced by Hillary Clinton in California by more than 4 million votes.

The proposed constitutional amendment, titled California Nationhood, would also ask voters to repeal language that states the U.S. Constitution is the supreme

law. If approved, it calls for scheduling a vote in 2019 to ask voters, “Should California become a free, sovereign and independent country?”

Threats to secede from the United States have been a part of American politics almost since the nation was founded. The most serious attempt came before and during the Civil War, when 11 Southern states left to form the Confederacy.

Another hurdle would be the U.S. Constitution, which does not provide for state secession.

The campaign must submit the valid voter signatures by July 25 to qualify for the November 2018 ballot.