

RISE AND SHINE



Steve Tool/The Chieftain

The sun rises over Wallowa County on a recent morning.

State survey: Area schools still lagging in math scores

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Oregon Department of Education report cards for 2015 show Wallowa County schools continuing to struggle to bring math scores up to the state target — 40 percent of students meeting or exceeding state standards.

The level of failure in math is significant for certain grade levels in the three largest districts in the county.

Wallowa High scores the lowest in the county with just 6.7 percent of 11th-grade students meeting or exceeding state standards for math.

The statewide report is not stellar, either. Just 31.6 percent of Oregon's 11th-grade students meet the math standard.

Younger students in Wallowa did much better, beating the state average (42.5 percent) with 50 percent of students in grades 6-8 meeting or exceeding state standards. Wallowa students in grades 3-5 were near the state average (44.8 percent) with 43.9 percent.

Wallowa School Superintendent Bret Uptmor said committees were looking at new materials and that the district expected to show improvement in the coming year.

"Keep in mind, this is the first year this assessment was ever given," Uptmor said. "Our kids took the OAKS test since freshmen year and had met the essential skills for graduation. The value of the test to students is just graduation. The staff feeling is that the kids may not have put all their effort into that last test to represent us the best. We're already working with our juniors to help them to understand that this is an institutional value as well."

Enterprise School district showed percentage rates that began low but improved as students moved up in grades.

Just 29.4 percent of students in grades 3-5 met or exceeded the standard, compared to the state's 44.8 percent average. In grades 6-8 the district met the goal, but the state exceeded it with a score of 42.5. By grade 11, Enterprise showed 45.8 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations, while the state lost ground with an average of 31.6 percent.

Enterprise School District Superintendent Brad Royse said the higher scores in later grades were no reason for complacency.

"I've definitely got a plan of attack for where we're low," he said. "The district has been working since the beginning of the year on this."

Royse highlighted eight key things the district was doing to improve math performance.

- The district hired two math specialists over the summer.
- A review of new math curriculum tied to standards for adoption next year is underway.
- Monitoring of all classes has increased.
- Teacher goals reflect an increase in math instruction, monitoring and assessment
- The district is reviewing new measurement tools.
- Staff is working at better communication with parents on the increased math standards.
- Staff has been encouraged

to map educational opportunities in classes.

• There's a renewed dedication of current in-service time to math instruction and improvement.

Joseph Charter School was in pretty good condition overall, with a dip in math scores the middle grades.

Grades 3-5 were less than a point below the state target at 39.6 percent. The state as a whole beat its 40 percent goal with 44.8 percent.

By grades 6-8, Joseph's percentage dropped to 31.6, compared to the state's 42.5. But by grade 11, Joseph surged ahead, outstripping the state performance by more than 10 percentage points, with 46.7 percent to the state's 31.6 percent.

Joseph School District Superintendent Lance Homan said the district had made a number of changes this year to prepare for the new testing, but that it had expected a drop in scores statewide because of the new test.

Joseph Charter is addressing student need by creating small work groups of students with similar difficulties so that they can get more individual instruction, he said.

"We've identified that as a way we can get kids caught

up faster," he said. "We're also putting more emphasis on solving problems with multiple steps."

The district also shuffled teachers in the lower grades to make each class self-contained and sent teachers out for training in the Smarter Balance program.

"Training has always been very helpful," Homan said. "We're always trying to get our teachers to workshops."

Stellar scores throughout the county included 92.9 percent of fifth-grade students in Wallowa meeting or exceeding state standards for science; 92.9 percent of Joseph Charter 11th-graders in science; and more than 95 percent of Enterprise students in all grades for both science and English language.

Oregon schools were not rated in 2015 because of the transition from OAKS testing to Smarter Balance testing.

"We didn't have a choice about changing testing," said Royse. "This is the third time since I've been an administrator here (17 years) that they've changed the testing system."

The full reports are available for viewing at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/data/reportcard/reports.aspx>

Thank You

Thanks to all who expressed their condolences at the passing of our loved one, Melvin Lathrop. Our family much appreciates all the care that he received while in the hospital from all the caregivers.

Joan Lathrop & family



to my darling girl Zari, the smartest, sweetest and most wonderful girl in the world!

Love,
GGM

Marijuana license comments wrap up

By Kathleen Ellyn
Wallowa County Chieftain

It was difficult for proponents of retail marijuana to find an approach that would impress Wallowa County Commissioners at the Dec. 7 public meeting. The meeting was the second of two scheduled to allow public comment before commissioners make a decision on whether to license marijuana producers, processors, wholesalers, dispensaries and retailers or opt out of licensing any marijuana businesses in the county.

The Thornton Room in the county courthouse was packed Monday morning and proponents of licensing came well prepared and armed with handouts from sources, including one from the National Cancer Institute that reported that studies on marijuana show that it can and has killed cancer cells.

Proponents made some headway in defending the licensing of medical marijuana dispensaries based on compassion for the sick and dying, but commissioners were unimpressed with scientific arguments either for or against, interpretations of probable tax benefits or discussions of the potential for added jobs in the industry.

Commissioners took seriously the concern that by normalizing the use of cannabis it would absolutely result in the product being used by children.

"It will get to the kids," Commissioner Paul Castilleja

said.

As to potential tax benefits, the idea that the county would base a decision based on potential taxes, was "slightly ridiculous," said Commissioner Susan Roberts.

"I don't want to have the county base its decisions on whether or not we're going to get tax dollars," Roberts said. "There are lots of ill things that we could do that would generate tax dollars. We get a lot of things off of alcohol tax, cigarette tax all of that and then we spend a lot of that helping people not do those things."

Commissioner Mike Hayward, after thanking all who testified and acknowledging their points, said he was convinced the issue was one of values.

"I've become a real negative person about science," he said. "My dealings with the forestry sector — which I have

a lot more familiarity with than this — you decide what you want the outcome to be and you get the science to back it up. And it sounds like it's the same in this industry — you can get science on both sides.

"So, to me, science doesn't count. It's about people's values and what they want to do with their lives. If their values choose to believe that set of science, that's where they're going to be."

As to the potential of jobs created in the industry, Hayward pointed out that no potential producers were present at the meetings to argue their point.

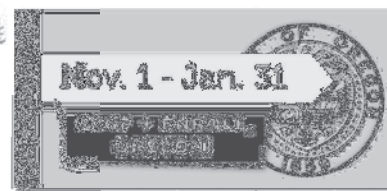
"The producers that might make a living doing this, I don't see any of them here," Hayward said. "I don't know if that means they're not interested or what."

All commissioners noted that different decisions might be made in the future.

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It will run from December 1st thru December 24th
All donations to benefit the Wallowa County Food Bank.
*Must be done at time of delivery or bring food items by the bulk plant prior to next delivery.



ANNUAL WALLOWA COUNTY

Food Bank Drive



SPONSORED BY THE WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN

Donate and have a chance to WIN \$100!

The more you donate, the more chances you have to win.

We're asking everyone to pitch in and help our local food banks by donating this month.

This will help those in our community who are in need. Your donations can be in the form of unexpired, nonperishable food items or cash donations that will be used to purchase such items for the food bank.

Your name will be entered in a \$100 prize drawing one time for every 10 items donated and/or \$10 donation increment.

Please bring donations to the Wallowa County Chieftain office by Wednesday, December 23rd at 5pm.

The drawing will be held December 24th and the WINNER will be notified that day.

All participants will be highlighted in the December 30th issue of the Chieftain.

Thank you for supporting our community!

If you have any questions, please call Cheryl at 541-426-4567

