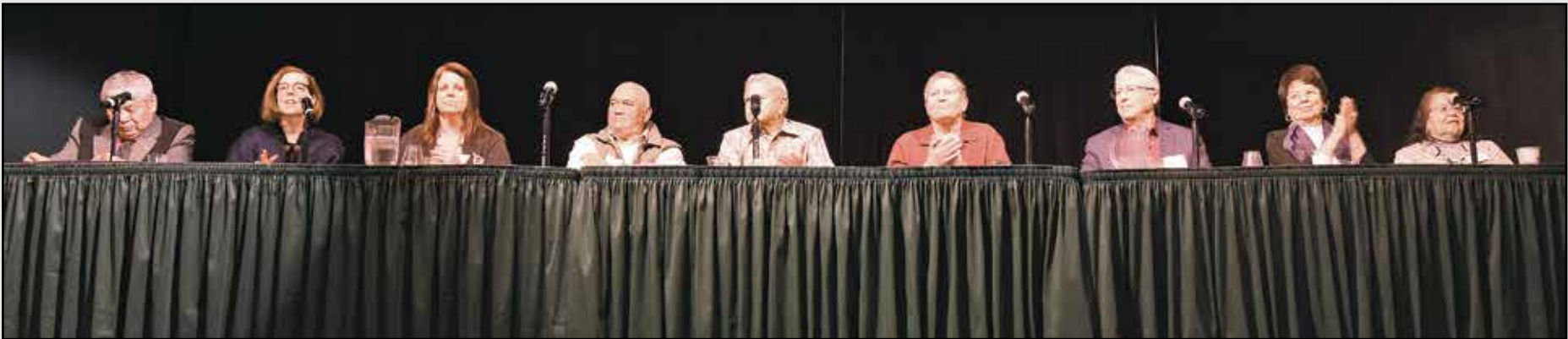




Photos courtesy of Wil Phinney/Confederated Umatilla Journal

Grand Ronde Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, right, joined other Tribal leaders at the annual Tribal-State Summit held Tuesday, Dec. 3, at the Wildhorse Resort & Casino on the Umatilla Indian Reservation outside of Pendleton. Gov. Kate Brown, second from left, attended the summit, which discussed issues of importance to and cooperation between Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes and the state. It was the first time in 10 years that the summit has been hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Kennedy said the value of the summit occurred in the networking with other Tribal heads and state department employees.

Eastern Oregon summit

Tribal Council member Jack Giffen Jr., fourth from left, brought in the Grand Ronde Tribal flag during the annual Tribal-State Summit held Tuesday, Dec. 3, at the Wildhorse Resort & Casino on the Umatilla Indian Reservation outside of Pendleton. Giffen joined Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, Secretary Jon A. George and Tribal Council members Kathleen George and Michael Langley at the summit.



‘We know we must support students from day one’

STUDENTS continued
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the Tribe.

For example, teachers and administrators meet several times a year to discuss student progress and how to best support each student. In January, the Tribe’s Education Department will speak at assemblies at Faulconer-Chapman and Sheridan High School.

“We are planning events to educate all of our students about Tribal traditions and helping them feel comfortable and supported in our schools,” Sugg says.

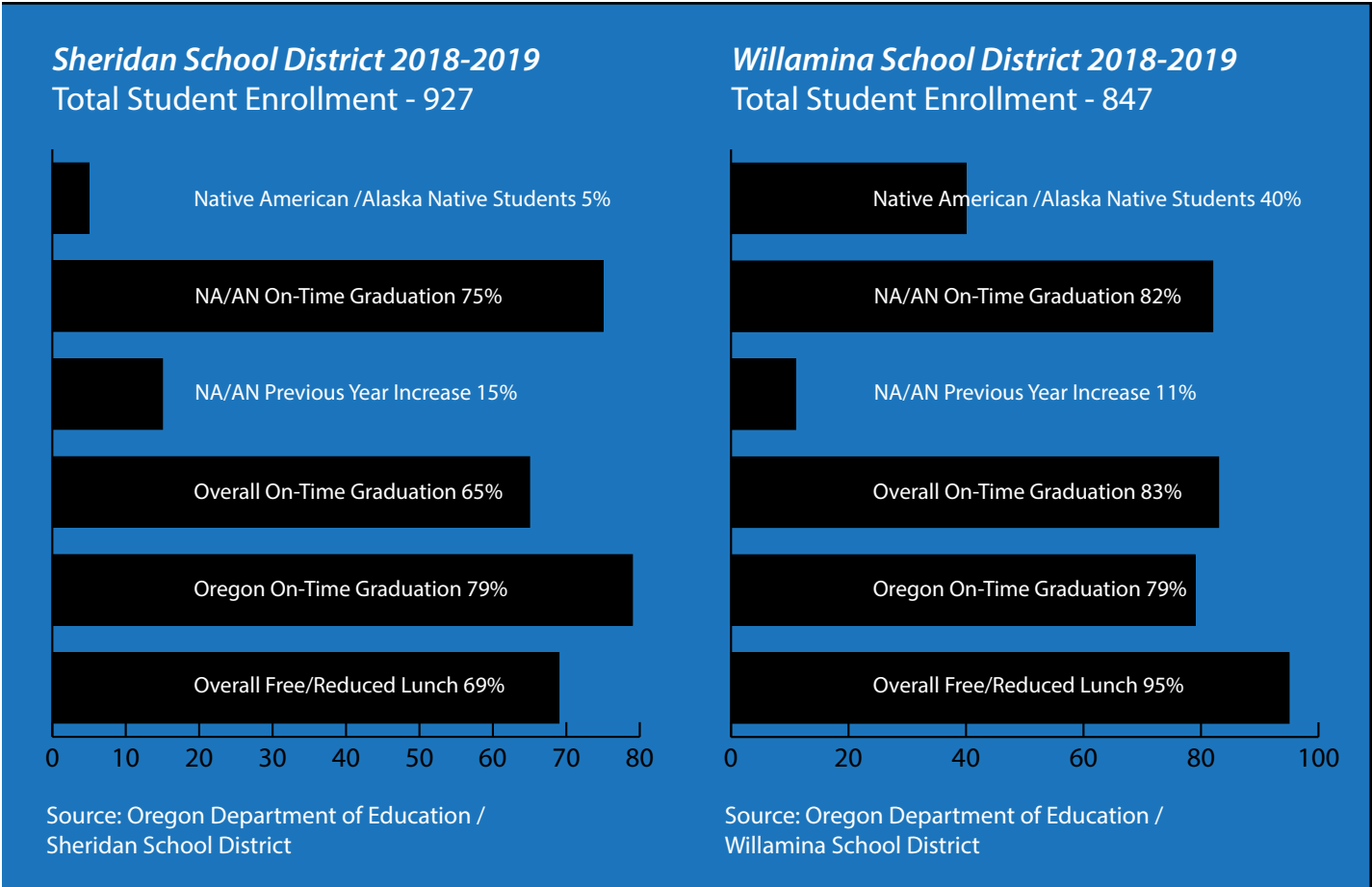
Historically, on-time graduation rates for Native Americans and Alaska Natives have lagged behind white students, but this is changing.

“Overall our (Native) students have performed relatively equal to all other subgroups,” Zimbrick says. “I would point out the strong investment the (Grand Ronde) Tribe has made in education overall: Quality preschool programs, afterschool programs, tutors during the school year and summer programs.”

She notes that Willamina High School’s Life Education for Alternative Directions also has been instrumental.

“Mrs. (Heather) Hughes, who runs our alternative education program has done an amazing job building relationships with students in her program,” Zimbrick says. “She has helped students that are credit deficient get back on track and graduate.”

Willamina has three goals district-wide to improve graduation outcomes for all students. These



Graph created by Samuel Briggs III

are focusing on core academics such as math and reading, improving school culture by creating an atmosphere where students are cared for and want to attend class, and addressing equity concerns by defining what it means and how current policies and procedures have an effect.

“Graduation is the most important goal for all students and it begins in kindergarten,” Zimbrick says. “We know we must support students from day one upon entering our schools.”

To encourage on-time graduation, the district developed an “early warning system” of monitoring attendance, behavior and course performance. The district also has placed emphasis on the career technical education options, and notes that students who participate in those classes have a higher graduation rate.

“Last year our CTE participants had a graduation rate of 97 percent and our CTE completers who take five or more classes had a 100-percent graduation rate,” Zimbrick says.

Studies have shown that proper

nutrition has a direct effect on school performance. In Willamina, more than 95 percent of the student population receives free and reduced lunches.

“Poverty is definitely a challenge, but it is possible to be a high poverty and high performing district,” Zimbrick says. “We know we need to meet basic needs in order to educate our students. We feed student four to five times a day at no cost to any student, offer school supplies and clothing as needed, and most importantly build relationships that are genuine and caring.” ■