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GRADUATION from page 1A

Still, there are a handful of students who do not end up graduating, and the reasons for this are complex and may be different than many would think.

"Kids don't get to their senior year and drop out. That's rare," Grzeskowiak said. "When that happens, it's usually because of a family issue. A parent falls ill and the child has to drop out and take care of the family."

Another issue that can occur is how the state tracks graduation rates, which is different from other states. In Texas, if a student moves to a high school, the school is responsible for the student to graduate. However, if the student moves away, the school is no longer responsible for the student.

Oregon is different. When a student moves away, the school is still responsible for the student until the school can prove that they enrolled in another program. But if the district can't prove that the student enrolled in another program, it counts as a dropout for the school.

"Somehow, when they're moving, we lose connection," Grzeskowiak explained. "If they've had an enrollment in your school,

and aren't registered somewhere else, they're your dropout. It happens more often than people think."

That's not to say the district simply gives up after a student moves away unexpectedly.

"Our administrators and councilors have done a very good job of tracking kids through social media to find out where they are, what they're doing, and if they're not doing something academic, working to get them in a program so they can get completed," Grzeskowiak said. "If they can complete through us, great. If we can get them completed through job corps, community college, or get enrolled in another school district, great. They'll become a completer for somebody."

With a local economy that is seasonal, students moving in and out of the district is common.

"We have a group of kids that start with us in the fall, they're here with us until Christmas, then they leave because they're parents are working a seasonal job," Grzeskowiak said. "And then they come back at spring break. That's about five percent of our population. They cycle out twice a year."

Harklerode added, "The previous year, we finished with 610 students at the elementary school, but we had almost 750 students go through the school at some point."

And every time a student moves, the more difficult it is for them to graduate on-time.

"For them, it's a continuity issue," Grzeskowiak said. "They try and pick up at another school, and then they're leaving in the middle of another term to come back here. If a kid never moves, they have an 85 percent chance of graduating. If they move once, it drops to 50 percent. If they move

twice, it's down to 25 percent."

But one of the greatest problems with graduation is baked into the system itself, as schools across the nation have shifted to college preparedness.

"CREDIT BANKRUPTCY"

"When I first started teaching here, we had kids that graduated as juniors," Grzeskowiak said. "They were graduating early because they had a total number of credits."

But a push for students to become "college ready" in the past few decades has increased the number of classes students are required to take.

"It takes 24 credits to graduate," Grzeskowiak explained. "Ideally, six credits every single year. Freshmen have a requirement for math, English, science, health, social studies and then one elective. Next year, as a sophomore, they have one less required class. For our freshmen, six of their seven periods are pretty much predetermined. For sophomores, five of their seven periods a day are predetermined. By the time they get to be a senior, they have personal finance economics and a fourth year of English. Those are the only two prescribed classes."

The process seems simple enough: start your high school career taking the prescribed classes, and then finish it up exploring a wide variety of electives that could help you choose which direction you want to take in life.

But in reality, things don't always work as planned, as Algebra 1 is the most failed class by students.

"If you came in as a freshman and you have six prescribed classes, and you failed two or three of them, you have to retake those required classes in the next two years," Grzeskowiak said.

See CREDITS page 8A

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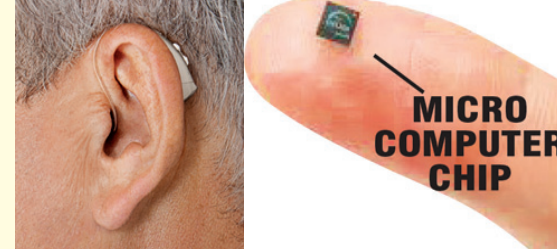
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