

CGHS to consider denying privileges for chronically absent students

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The South Lane School District gave their support to Cottage Grove High School to try a new way

to cure senioritis: deny chronically absent students the ability to walk at graduation and attend prom.

"As of the holiday break, over 50 percent of our seniors are chronically absent and several of them are 18, which means we can't do anything about it through the truancy court system," Gary Roberts told the board.

To be considered chronically absent by the state of Oregon, a student has to miss more than 10 percent of the school year. In South Lane, that equates to approximately 18 days of school. And while the school district says it is aware of circumstances that would prevent students from having a clean attendance record, Roberts told the board some students priorities have shifted,

"I have chronically absent kids because they have to get their nails done. I've had a mother call and say, 'yeah she had to get her nails done.' Those aren't acceptable absences for our kids." Roberts said. "They're missing important instructional time for things they can be doing when school is out or on the weekends."

While South Lane School District reported a nearly 94 percent graduation rate, keeping seniors in class has become an issue. According to Roberts, students are citing several reasons for skipping out of school including the rigor of senior classes and their ability to pass their classes without attending.

According to superintendant Krista Parent, if a student passes all of their classes from freshman year to junior year, they only have a few course requirements left to graduate and the remainder of their schedule becomes elective courses.

The suggestion of denying the right to walk drew the attention of board member Jerry Settlemyer who said, "The kids are in school 12 years and graduation is at the end of 12 or 13 grade. There has to be something else that answers why school isn't important enough." He went on to say, "I don't know when we say rigor of senior class-

es, that means they can skip half and still pass or is it too hard, why do they care? I think it's very important for kids to attend school and for us to want them to be in school. Every day in school is valuable but I think the penalty to a family of not having the ceremony isn't fair."

The consensus of the board, however, was to note that parents and children are in charge of their consequences and could avoid them by attending school.

Roberts said he had reached out to other districts to deal with the issue of attendance and this idea was one that showed promise.

High school principal Iton Udosenata addressed the meeting from the audience to note that the school had no intention of punishing students who had valid reasons for missing school.

"It really is important to us that every kid cross the stage," he said. "We're not going to ding kids who have serious issues that prevent them from going to school. What we don't want to do is just let kids off the hook who decide it's not important."

The changes would go into effect this year for seniors and next year the restrictions on dances for chronically absent kids would hit the underclassmen. All students already beyond the 10 percent limit will be getting individualized calls or messages home to alert them of their past attendance record. All students will be getting letters sent home to explain the new policy. Absences counted towards the policy began on Feb. 1.

"We're giving them a fresh start," Roberts said.

To reach the 10 percent limit going forward, students would have to miss a total of 10 days between now and the end of the school year. Students with documented medical conditions or documented family emergencies would not have those days counted against them.

"Doesn't it seem odd that children missing that much school can be graduating?" Merlene Martin of the board asked.

However, legislation bars teachers from failing students based solely on attendance. Students who complete their coursework can technically graduate despite their lack of attendance.

Play *Continued from A1*

mispronunciations by Stache (played by Kory Weimer), who is then corrected by Smee (played by Sophie Blades) truly hit a nostalgic nerve when thinking of the goofy villain from the Disney animated film.

The boy who is later named Peter is played by Sheldon Hall. The young Hall brings to the stage the angst and anger of a neglected orphan boy who hates grown-ups, but also brings the innocence of boyhood to light.

Outside of the outstanding cast, the set design (**FeO2 group or company**) served as a background for a story that has a lot of fantasy-based elements to it. In Act I, the set is used for the two ships. A variety of wooden boxes, ladders and rope made up the vessels. Tony Rust deserves recognition for the direction of the play, and one of the more interestingly directed scenes was where Molly sneaks around multiple levels and peaks into different rooms on board. The movement throughout the set is well done for the given limited space.

For theatre lovers, this is not one to miss. *Peter and the Starcatcher* is boisterous, brazen and beautifully bestowed unto its audience (and will have its wordplay evidently rub off).



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