

Dallas, Central above state attendance levels

Falls City and Perrydale fall below state average at 76.6 and 78 percent, respectively

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — State and local educators see a direct relationship between academic success and the percentage of classes a student attends.

This month the Oregon Department of Education released a report tracking how many students in each district are above the “chronic absence” threshold, “positive attendance” of 90 percent during the 2014-15 school year.

Polk County’s two largest districts, excluding Salem-Keizer, are both above the state average of 83 percent. Central had the highest percentage of student “not chronically absent” at 85 percent. Dallas was second at 83.7 percent.

All four districts saw lower attendance at the kindergarten level. Perrydale saw 71.4 percent “positive” attendance; Falls City had a 72.7 percent rate; Central reported 76.7 percent; and Dallas had the highest at 77.6 percent.

Steve Martinelli, Dallas’ director of instructional services, said lower attendance among Dallas’ youngest students could be a product of having half-day

District	Total students enrolled	No. of students not chronically absent*	Percentage of students not chronically absent
Central	2,999	2,549	85
Dallas	2,943	2,464	83.7
Falls City	128	98	76.6
Perrydale	309	241	78

*Not chronically absent is defined as student attending school at least 90 percent of the time.
Source: Oregon Department of Education. State average is 83 percent.

GRAPHIC BY LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

classes until this year. He said it’s much easier to keep a child home from school for an appointment when classes are only half days.

“We are hoping with the addition of a full-day kindergarten program we will see an increase in attendance at this grade level,” Martinelli said. “In fact, early numbers indicate this to be true, and we will wait to see if the trend continues.”

Dallas also saw a dip in attendance in seventh and eighth grades, at 79.8 percent and 77.3 percent respectively.

Martinelli is hoping the addition of more electives at LaCreole Middle School will increase positive attendance

at that level.

“We are pretty skilled at identifying those families in need and providing support to them,” Martinelli said. “As always, our work begins at the lower grade levels. If we can encourage good attendance and set up families with positive school routines, then we will have less of an attendance problem in future grades.”

Perrydale and Falls City were below state average, at 78 percent and 76.6 percent, respectively.

Falls City Superintendent Jack Thompson said it is just common sense that good attendance in most cases would result in better suc-

cess for students.

“If they are not in class, they are not getting the education we are trying to teach,” he said.

The difficult part is getting those students who are chronically absent engaged in their schooling again.

He said the school tries to recognize and reward students with perfect and “positive” attendance records. Falls City also tries to make school a fun place to be, where they can see their friends and cultivate good relationships with teachers and staff.

That works for most students.

For those who miss so much school they can’t

catch up and get frustrated, pulling them back into class is more challenging.

“You can draw a perfectly straight line between attendance and the struggles they are having in school,” Thompson said.

Willamette Education Service District offers Falls City a truancy officer who speaks to students and their parents about the importance of attendance.

“He goes out and talks to the families,” Thompson said. “He does a good job.”

But there really is no way of forcing students to attend beyond having a court issue parents a fine. By the time that process is complete, the damage to the

student’s education is already done.

“Your kid has missed a lot of school at that point,” Thompson said.

Central Superintendent Buzz Brazeau said the district also is using rewards to emphasize good attendance and making school an environment students want to be in.

He’s seen evidence of that in periodic visits to his schools.

“What I saw was a real sense of excitement in teachers as they are teaching their class. That translates to kids,” he said.

Brazeau added just being above the state average isn’t good enough.

He would like to see more students districtwide finding a teacher, sport, activity or elective that motivates them to come to school.

He noted some absences are because of participation in athletic events, but that is a problem the district will live with.

“What can we do to connect to kids?” he said. “If you are connected, you are probably going to come. That will solve the problem.”

For more information or to see the report, go to www.polkio.com for a link to the report.

ACADEMIC HONORS

OSU announces fall honor roll

CORVALLIS — Names of students from Polk County who have made the scholastic honor roll fall term have been announced by Oregon State University.

Students on the honor roll are:

Dallas
4.0 GPA: Katharine E. Crawford, senior, psychology; Megan L. Mahoney, junior, dig-

ital communication arts; Amanda J. McCollister, senior, human development and family science; Kaden Z. Montague, senior, electrical & computer engineering; Jacob R. Shryer, freshman, pre-mechanical engineering; Zacheriah A. Tucker, senior, psychology.

3.5 to 3.99 GPA: Tyler D. Aldrich, senior, athletic training; Alexander L. Bird, junior, civil engineering; Kimberly R. Brown, senior, women, gender and sexuality; Janet H. Ferguson, junior, chemistry; Callie A.

Instenes, senior, graphic design; Felicia L. Kluting, junior, accountancy; Emily A. Lund, junior, public health; Conner J. Maclean, freshman, pre-civil engineering; Joseph P. Orton, sophomore, biology; Michael Polander, senior, mechanical engineering; Gareen L. Porter, freshman, pre-computer science; Ryan W. Springer, freshman, pre-computer science; Alyson N. Steckley, senior, human development and family science; Kyle R. Stockdall, junior, marketing; Anthony M.

Tallon, senior, exercise and sport science.

Falls City
3.5 to 3.99 GPA: Caleb J. Schmidt, Junior, mechanical engineering.

Independence
3.5 to 3.99 GPA:

Justin T. Bruntmyer, senior, computer science; Carlos Falcon, senior, exercise and sport science; Matthew G. Grandquist, junior, biology; Stephen Hinkle, sophomore, English; Megan R. Marchand, junior, agricultural sciences;

Angela B. Mosieur, senior, forest engineering; Sydnee R. Stoller, junior, agricultural business management; Troy V. Tyma, sophomore, physics; Trevor A. Whitaker, junior, pre-mechanical engineering.

Monmouth
4.0 GPA: Makayla R. Kachlein, sophomore, zoology; Benjamin E. Petersen, junior, history; Anne C. Snell, freshman, environmental sciences.

3.5 to 3.99 GPA: Erica B. Brown, senior, bio-health sciences; Hanna R. Brown, fresh-

man, bio-health sciences; Julia L. Kenyon, freshman, university exploratory studies; Sean R. Maroney, sophomore, university exploratory studies; Zachary D. McClure, senior, chemical engineering; Trevor Nash, freshman, biology; Travis J. Rice, senior, public health; Emily F. Wells, sophomore, environmental sciences.

Rickreall
4.0 GPA: Jenna Drader, junior, nutrition.

3.5 to 3.99 GPA: Bridget H. Regan, junior, zoology.



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