

Polk County Itemizer-Observer

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State report cards mixed bag

Itemizer-Observer staff report
POLK COUNTY — Oregon Department of Education released report cards on all schools and school districts in the state on Thursday.

The reports include data on test scores, graduation rates, academic progress, dropout rates, class size, percentage of freshmen on track to graduate, and student demographics.

Schools are not rated in the report cards, but performance at the district level and school level is compared to state averages, and averages for similar districts and schools.

For Polk County districts, the data show a mixed bag of results for 2016-17.

Central School District saw students meeting standards on English language assessments fall slightly in the elementary grades (3-5), drop in the middle school grades (6-8) and increase by more than 8 percent for high school juniors.

All those marks are below state average and below the average of similar districts in all age groups except for high school juniors.

Students achieving standards on math assessments are below state and similar district averages, but 2016-17 performance was up slightly in the elementary grades and high school juniors.

Central freshman on-track rate (the percentage of students who earned 25 percent of graduation credits by the end of their freshman year) is higher than state and like-district averages and up slightly from 2015-16.

Graduation rates from 2015-16 (the last year data is available) saw a significant jump to 86 percent from 72.3. That is more than 10 percentage points higher than the state average.

In Dallas, about 70 percent of freshmen were on track to graduate after the 2016-17, compared to the state average of 83.4 and similar districts at 81 percent.

Graduation rates also fell to about 75 percent in 2015-16, from 82 percent the year before. The 2015-16 mark is nearly identical to the state average and slightly higher than like districts.

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COURTESY OF TALEWIND VISUALS/Itemizer-Observer

The "Alone" video was shot by Talewind Visuals, of Salem, and written and performed by Central students.

Teens to teens: Never alone

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — In Polk County, about one out of every 12 high school juniors say they have attempted suicide.

When asked if they had ever seriously considered suicide, the percentage more than doubles to 20 percent, according to the Student Wellness Survey.

Those figures were so alarming to students in Central High School's Power Peers leadership class that they decided to help combat the trend. With the assistance of the Mid-Valley Suicide Prevention Coalition and Central staff, Thursday the class kicked off a year-long suicide awareness and prevention campaign.

The campaign begins with a short video entitled

"Alone," which members of the Power Peers class helped write and portrayed the characters.

It opens with main character, Alone, gazing at a card that says: "Need to talk to someone?" as he wakes up in the morning.

Before he can make it through to 3:30, he listens to his parents fight before leaving school. He endures the Popular Girl's group of friends making fun of him as he walks past in the hall at school. Then, he gets pushed to the ground by the school jock.

As he walks to the back of his class, he passes the future Valedictorian already hard at work before the bell rings.

He feels depressed — alone — until he goes to the

counseling office, where he makes a realization. Jacob Hamilton, who plays Alone, wants the audience to follow that journey with his character.

"I just want people to know that they are not alone," he said.

Hamilton, Marcos Cedillo (Jock), Savannah Mendoza (Popular Girl), and Erika Leon (Valedictorian) worked on the production last spring.

Staff from the coalition, part of Polk County's Family & Community Outreach department, met with the Power Peers class, seeking assistance from teens in helping other teens.

Doug Gouge, the program director for MVSPC, said the organization has been working with the class for the last two years. Last year, the organization presented two suicide prevention training

sessions to the students.

"We feel like having youth involved in the messaging is very, very important," he said. "I feel like youth are more likely to listen to their peers at times than they are to an adult, especially an adult they don't know."

Talewind Visuals, of Salem, filmed "Alone" and a second video to be released later in the school year as part of the campaign.

Thursday morning, the video was shown to all classes at Central High School and released on the high school's and on the coalition's websites and social media platforms in hopes of reaching as many people as possible. Each student received the same card with counseling information Hamilton's Alone had in the video.

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Changes coming to Summerfest

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Summerfest, the peak of summer events in Dallas, is undergoing a renovation.

By next summer, Summerfest — or perhaps the festival formerly known as Summerfest — will be shorter and more community-focused, said Ashley Kahl, the Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center programs and events manager.

"Collectively as an organization, we felt the need to make it a more community-inspired event," Kahl said. "Get it back to its roots."

Summerfest started out as a fundraiser for an extracurricular club at Dallas High School, she said, though she's not certain of the year it began. That morphed in to what was known for decades as "Krazy Dayz."

Eventually it was renamed Summerfest, a four-day festival that took place for three days in downtown before moving for the last day to Dallas City Park.

Kahl said Sunday's Tom Newton Car



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer file

Erotic City will return to Summerfest in 2018.

Show, Art in the Park and Breakfast in the Park, sponsored by Dallas Rotary and Dallas Arts Association, won't be affected by the changes.

"They are still on board to do those," Kahl said. "It's such a fun day."

It's the downtown events, which the

visitors center is responsible for hosting, that will see the changes.

The visitors center has formed a five-person committee that will begin meeting in November to redesign the festival.

See SUMMERFEST, Page 6A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS

Edwards grows state's largest watermelon.

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FALLS CITY

City hires new code enforcer.

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INDEPENDENCE

DACA March held on Sunday.

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MONMOUTH

Western Oregon's cross-country team eyes conference titles.

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SPORTS

Falls City football team defeats Yoncalla.

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POLK COUNTY

County awaits response on safety corridor request.

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Taxpayers to see kicker

Itemizer-Observer staff report

SALEM — A more than \$436 million tax surplus was confirmed by the Office of Economic Analysis, triggering a tax surplus credit, or "kicker," for the 2016 tax year.

The surplus will be returned to taxpayers on a credit on their 2017 state personal income tax returns filed in 2018. There won't be any kicker checks issued as there were in the past.

To calculate the amount of your credit, multiply your 2016 tax liability before any credits — line 24 on the 2016 Form OR-40 — by 6.3 percent. This percentage is determined and certified by the Office of Economic Analysis. Taxpayers who claimed a credit for tax paid to another state subtract the credit amount from their liability before calculating the credit.

You're eligible to claim the kicker if you filed a 2016 tax return and had tax due before credits. Even if you don't have a filing obligation for 2017, you have to file a 2017 tax return to claim your credit.

The state may use all or part of your kicker to pay any state debt you owe, such as tax due for other years, child support, court fines, or school loans.

For more information: 503-378-4988, or email questions.dor@oregon.gov.

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK



wed	thu	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue
Looking for a tasty treat? Make a chocolate cupcake and celebrate National Chocolate Cupcake Day.	The National Weather Service presents training on how to be a weather spotter at Dallas Fire Station. 7 p.m. Free.	The bluegrass jam returns to Faith Evangelical Free Church after taking the summer months off. 7 p.m. Free.	Get your pink on in support of cancer research at Eola Hills Winery in Rickreall with a showing of "Pretty in Pink." 5 p.m. \$5 donation.	Grace in Dallas hosts The Amazing Chemistry Show and Family Experience traveling science center at DHS. 4 p.m. Free.	Bring your brew of choice and enjoy a lecture series on New Testament figures at St. Thomas Episcopal Church. 7 p.m.	Want to improve your public speaking? Check out Dallas Toastmasters at 450 SE Washington St., Dallas. 6 to 7 p.m.
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