

State audits progress on grad rate

An audit released this week by the Oregon Secretary of State says the state is making progress to improve Oregon's graduation rate.

It also provides recommendations to build on that work and help prepare more students for graduation.

Among the recommendations:

- Provide targeted support to students in specific groups with lower graduation rates, such as highly

mobile students who transfer between schools and districts, economically disadvantaged students, and middle school students.

- Provide support to schools with mid-range graduation rates rather than focusing on schools with the lowest graduation rates.

- Develop initiatives and collecting data about middle-schoolers.

- Provide better support to districts on using data.

High school: Grant is for job training

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ly liked to the availability of a skilled workforce," Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian said in making the grant announcement.

"As our economy changes – especially with automation on the rise – the importance of skills training in middle school, high school and throughout a person's career will only grow."

Graduation rates for students in Oregon career training programs are 15.5 percent higher than the statewide average.

The committee that selected which projects would win grants was made up of representatives from organized labor, trade groups, the business community, energy/power companies and educators.

Priority was given to programs that lead to high-wage, high-demand occupations, particularly for students who might otherwise struggle in traditional classes.

Warrenton has done well helping college-bound students meet their goals and the district has had success with those who struggle, said Jannusch, who spent 15 years teaching science and technology.

20,000 whales with 20,000 watchers

Whale Watch Week may begin Wednesday, but the whales already are visible, Oregon Parks and Recreation reports.

The agency will have trained volunteers on hand Dec. 27 through 31 at spots along the Oregon coast to help people see and learn about gray whales as they head south for the winter.

"Whales are a special part of the Oregon coast," said Luke Parsons, a ranger at the Whale Watching Center in Depoe Bay. "Nearly 20,000 people visit our whale watch sites each winter and ... I hope visitors walk away feeling a little more connected to these animals, along with a greater appreciation of our oceans."

An estimated 20,000 gray whales travel south from Alaska to their final destination off the coast of Baja, Mexico.

Volunteers from the Whale Watching Spoken Here program will be stationed at 24 sites along the coast during



Courtesy Oregon Parks and Recreation

Visitors catch a glimpse of a whale from a perch above the Pacific Ocean.

the event, including Ecola State Park in Canon Beach, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center in Ilwaco and Neah-kanie Mountain Historical Park.

They'll offer whale watch-

ing tips and facts about the animals from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily. Each year from December to mid-January, gray whales swim 6,000 miles down the coast to reach calving lagoons in Baja.

"We didn't have any real hands-on classes that give kids skills that they can walk out of school with and get a job," he said. "We need to get them interested and engaged in learning. ... There will always be a need for technical skills: working with wood, welding."

The grant is for January 2018 through June 2019 and includes money for summer programs.

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