

School districts try to make up for lack of report card data

Pandemic canceled state testing for 2019-20

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
STAFF WRITER

All the local school districts showed incomplete progress on their state report cards for 2019-20, but that was by design.

The report cards released to the public by the Oregon Department of Education on Thursday, Oct. 15 did not include ninth grade on-track for graduation figures, attendance data and test scores the state usually



Ely Cardenas receives his diploma at Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony on June 4, 2020. Graduation data is one of the only things featured on this year's report cards given to schools by the state.

shares with the district and the public, accounting for the pandemic that has forced students to learn from home since last March and caused state testing to be canceled in the spring.

All that remains in this year's report cards is graduation data and demographic data for students and teachers.

"It's not a useful document," said Hermiston School District Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Bryn Browning.

Instead of relying on the data supplied by the state,

Browning said Hermiston teachers are administering their own formative assessments to determine where their students need help academically. But given that these tests will be administered online instead of in person, Browning said it was far from the ideal way to gauge student performance.

Browning considered the district's 74% on-time graduation rate a bright spot, although it was still below the state's 80% rate.

But compared to where the district was five years ago, when it only graduated about 64% of its seniors on

time, the 2018-19 graduation rate listed in the recently released report cards represents a vast improvement.

Umatilla School District's on-time graduation rate was 87% for 2018-19. Stanfield School District's rate was 94%.

Echo School District was 87%. Morrow County School District was 88%.

The report cards for each district can be found on the Oregon Department of Education's website at oregon.gov/ode/schools-and-districts/reportcards.

COLUMN

The importance of reading to children can't be overstated

For generations we have heard how important it is to read to children. It provides adult time that the child (or children) so often crave. You model reading and share in the adventure or learn about the subject matter. There are so many benefits that impact children and they will apply them later in their classrooms at school and for life.



Scott Smith
GUEST COLUMNIST

Taking the time to have your child sit and read with you has a big impact on their attention span. Learning to sit and listen is not a natural behavior. We are wired to move. Having your child sit and listen is teach-

ing them and training them that there are times when you have to focus on information they might not be so interested in. Start off slow. You have to remember the child wants control and the way this is accomplished is by getting you off task. You might have to start with two minutes of sitting and looking at a book. Then later in the day or the next day add a minute. Make each session longer and soon they will realize they are getting your time. Later when they start attending school, they have an easier time sitting and focusing on what is happening in the classroom. Again, this is not a natural thing to do but a taught behavior.

If the child is struggling with paying attention, having them draw or

color while you read will defeat the purpose of reading to the child. You have changed the focus of learning and now are reading for your pleasure not the child's skill-building. When they draw or color as you read it appears that you are receiving the behavior you want. They are engaged, however they are not engaged in learning to sit and listen to expand their ability to learn. The focus of reading to the child is to help the brain develop skills the child will need when they are older.

While reading with the child it is important to interact with them. Talking about the pictures and what the characters are doing or are going to do helps keep their attention. Pre-schoolers are not reading but they can listen. Remember, lis-

tening is a learned skill. Talking about what is being read and discussing it builds understanding or comprehension. Listening understanding and comprehension will then transfer to reading understanding and comprehension when they are older and in school.

When children reach the intermediate grades, we see them often struggle with comprehension about what they have read. Quite often they also struggle with language comprehension. We have to build the child's ability to comprehend what they have heard before they will be able to apply that skill to their own reading. Often many teachers feel they have to focus on reading comprehension when their students have not yet acquired the

skills of language (listening) comprehension.

There is NO question one of the best things you can do for a child is to read to them! If you wish to have a huge impact on a child's learning as they get older, it is key to build their endurance in listening, reading, and discussing. It may only start with less than five minutes. Once you let them draw or color, remember the learning skill has changed and you are teaching them that, "If you do not want to do what I want you to do, it is okay to draw or color."

Reading and discussing what is happening builds pathways in their brain that will later transfer to their own reading comprehension and to life. As you are out driving with your child and see a lake you can ask them

questions like, "Do you think there are fish in that lake, like in our book?"

By doing this you are taking reading to your child to a whole new level of inferencing and prediction. Who knows, they might be the child who understands things uniquely and is able to make changes in our world we had never thought about. Keep reading and discussing with your children.

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia — OR board as their Parent/Teacher Liaison.

BMCC offering two virtual college fairs

HERMISTON HERALD

Blue Mountain Community College and the Inter-Mountain Education Service District have teamed up to bring two virtual college fairs to local students who want to explore their options after high school.

The first event is Tuesday, Oct. 27, from 1-5 p.m. The second will be Monday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to noon.

More than 10 colleges from the region will participate. According to a news release, students will be able to learn about programs offered at the college, the admissions process, scholarships and financial aid for students from all backgrounds including undocumented students.

Students, parents and others who wish to partici-



Blue Mountain Community College is hosting two virtual college fairs. The events, for students who want to explore their options after high school, are set for Tuesday, Oct. 27 and Monday, Nov. 2.

ate should register to attend ahead of time at bluecc.edu/enrollment-services/campus-tour-information.

Educators can register their entire class for a virtual field trip. Participants

can RSVP even if they are not able to participate for the entire length of the event.

Students who participate can enter in drawings for prizes.

For more information,

visit the link above or contact BMCC's admissions office at 541-278-5936 and leave a voicemail to be contacted by an admissions counselor.

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- 4. Umatilla** - Hwy 730 (next to Columbia Harvest Foods)
- 5. Umatilla County** - Hwy 395 N. (next to transfer station)
- 6. Umatilla County** - 81144 N. Hwy 395
- 7. Irrigon** - 198 W. Columbia Lane
- 8. Boardman** - SE Front Street

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