

Schools invest to keep students coming back

By **EDWARD STRATTON**
The Astorian

Chelsea Archibald was working as a pastry chef at the Stephanie Inn in Cannon Beach when she saw a listing for a new culinary teacher at Seaside High School and decided to take a chance. Now in her second year, Archibald runs four daily classes in one of the high school’s most popular programs.

Seaside’s investment in a culinary instructor was part of around \$750,000 a year added to the budgets of Clatsop County school districts by Measure 98, a voter-approved initiative to improve graduation rates, add career-technical classes and expand students’ access to college credits.

As school districts invest, they are also creating school improvement plans to secure even bigger pots of money from the Student Success Act. The new gross receipts tax is projected to add \$1 billion a year in funding for K-12 initiatives statewide.

Oregon voters passed Measure 98 in 2016 to help improve the state’s dismal graduation rate of 74%, the third-worst in the U.S. The measure added \$170 million over the past two years earmarked for dropout prevention, career-technical courses and expanded college credit opportunities.

The state’s graduation rate increased to 78.7% statewide last year, the fifth year of improvement but still nearly 6% behind the national average.

Measure 98

New and improved programs have popped up at school districts around the county — construction in Jewell, welding in Knappa, automotive in Warrenton, agriculture in Astoria and culinary in Seaside.

Seaside spent nearly half its money hiring Archibald, the first full-time instructor in several years, and strengthening a culinary program Jeff Roberts, the school principal, said half the student body was fore-casted to take.

“Given our community, with such a strong hospitality base, it dovetails with our goals to provide kids



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Warrenton-Hammond School District used part of its Measure 98 funding on a back-to-school night for incoming ninth graders at Warrenton High School.

real-world opportunities,” he said.

Roberts tracked the demise of career-technical programs to Measure 5, a 1990 state ballot initiative that capped property taxes and made schools more reliant on more volatile income taxes.

“When Measure 5 passed, trade programs were some of the first to get cut,” Roberts said. “Now you’ve seen a shift in attitudes, with trades coming back into schools.”

By Halloween, Rod Heyen, the principal of Warrenton High School, hopes to be holding automotive and metal fabrication classes in a new career-technical building going up next to the school.

The building was donated. Its construction was paid for by a career-technical revitalization grant. The school district tapped into Measure 98 funds to hire new automotive instructor James Veverka, who is developing a four-year automotive and metal fabrication program, starting with basic automotive classes this fall.

Lynn Jackson, the principal at Astoria High School, has spread his Measure 98 funding throughout several academic programs.

Astoria brought back a dormant agriculture program and restarted a local chapter of Future Farmers of America. Tess Hamby, the school district’s new agricultural and wood shop teacher, said the chapter now has more than 20 students. Travel and her classroom equipment are largely

Research shows ninth graders who finish the school year on track academically are four times more likely to graduate. School districts have universally invested Measure 98 funds on easing the transition into high school, adding tutoring and increasing staffing to keep closer tabs

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Seaside principal Jeff Roberts, on the school’s newly expanded culinary program

paid for by Measure 98 and a state law passed this year to help improve agricultural education.

Jackson advertised to hire a robotics coach for the school district’s fledgling robotics program using Measure 98, which has also provided funding for business courses, another career-technical program.

“It has allowed us to develop a wide variety of interventions and enrichments,” he said.

on students’ progress.

Ian O’Brien, a former teacher at Warrenton High School, returned several years ago from a short stint as athletic director at Lakeridge High School in Lake Oswego. He became one of Warrenton High School’s two assistant principals, overseeing a team of several teachers who all focus on ninth graders.

“We’re just getting in their business, caring,” O’Brien said. “We want



Chelsea Archibald/The Astorian

Chelsea Archibald, top left, was hired as a full-time culinary instructor at Seaside High School using Measure 98 funds meant to support career-technical learning opportunities.

them to succeed.”

The school district has seen its ninth grade on-track metrics jump by more than 20% with the increased focus, he said. Warrenton’s graduation rate has steadily increased for at least the past seven years.

Astoria has paid for its attendance initiative, Strive for Five, using Measure 98 funds and hired a graduation coach, along with other efforts to improve the high school environment, said Superintendent Craig Hoppes.

Student Success Act

The state Legislature this year narrowly passed the Student Success Act, a gross receipts tax estimated to add \$1 billion a year in funding starting next school year.

Half the money school districts receive will be earmarked for reducing class size, increasing learning time, safety and well-rounded learning experiences. Up to 30% goes toward statewide initiatives such as fully funding Measure 98, improving cafeteria nutrition, school safety, equity and other support funds. At least 20% must be spent on early learning.

To access the money, school districts must submit school improvement plans

to the state by early December. Many are parlaying their strategic plans into the application.

Sheila Roley, the superintendent in Seaside, said the passage of the Student Success Act was fortuitous with her district just finishing up a five-year strategic plan.

“The focus is emotional and mental health for students,” Roley said of how funds would be utilized.

Much of the focus is on increased trauma-informed care. The education model takes into account the past traumatic experiences and how they affect a student’s ability to learn.

The legislation will help school districts expand preschool. A recent study found about 40% of 3- and 4-year-olds from lower-income families in Clatsop and Tillamook counties are not going to preschool.

Educators will meet next month with the state to ensure they know how to apply for Student Success Act money. Many have not received the application and don’t know how much to expect in extra funding.

“It’s a new experience for us to have more money, because we’re so accustomed to the budget going down,” Roley said.

Rotary fundraiser: Tailgate with Team Rotary

Seaside Signal

The Rotary Club of Seaside and its Foundation present the annual dinner buffet and auction at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 12, at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. The theme this year is “Tailgate with Team Rotary — Seaside.”

This is the single largest fundraiser of the year for the Seaside Rotary Foundation and allows the foundation to assist in serving the needs of not only our local community, but also worldwide.

Some examples of these programs include: Scholarships for Seaside High School graduates, the renowned international youth exchanges for high school students; and sponsorship of the all night

“alcohol-free and safe” Seaside High School grad night party, which Rotary has been supporting and leading for more than 25 years. Holiday programs including Santa’s workshop which provides holiday presents to hundreds of area children and families, Shop with a Cop and Adopt-a-Family. Rotary also supports the needs of seniors in our local community, providing water and sanitation in remote villages in third world countries, and the eradication of polio worldwide.

A key component of the dinner/auction are many live auction “packages” that can be bid on. Some examples this year include a New York Experience for two with tickets to the Jimmy Fallon Show and the Broadway musical “Aladdin” with a backstage tour, four

tickets to the Oregon-Oregon State civil war game, a traditional Spanish paella dinner for eight and dozens of silent auction items donated by area businesses.

Tickets are still avail-

able, but don’t delay. Cost for the buffet dinner/auction is \$65 per person and \$650 for a table of 10.

For questions, contact auction chair Sandy MacDowall at 503-738-6391.

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