

June 2, 2010

Dear Students, Parents, and Community:

As you may have already read, or heard, the Oregon Department of Education recently released the 2008-2009 high school dropout data for our state. Last week *The Oregonian* reported on this data with a story titled, "Not acceptable: Nearly one-third of Oregon high school students drop out." Along with this article they provided a list of the best and worst districts in the state, and in the Portland area, and the Estacada School District was tops on the "worst" list for both areas. This data needs some clarification to separate the District's alternative high schools from Estacada High School.

Many of you are aware that we offer three alternative high school options for high school age students in our district, and the data shared by *The Oregonian* included all of these programs. Two of our biggest programs include the Estacada Alternative High School, located at the Timber Lake Job Corps facility, and our Estacada Web Academy, whose office is in downtown Estacada. These two programs provide a much needed opportunity for students that is quite different from that found in a comprehensive high school like EHS. For example, at Estacada Alternative High School we serve a student body whose members have predominantly dropped out of another school in Oregon or elsewhere. These students' come to us in their third, fourth, and sometimes fifth and sixth year of secondary school, which is far behind that of their cohort. However, we are able to provide them with a second chance to earn a high school diploma, GED, and a certification in a professional trade. Almost every one of these students comes to our program without the mathematical chance to meet the four-year "cohort graduation" requirements and that is reflected in the data for the Estacada School District.

However, without this program hundreds of students a year would not be provided the academic education that is so valuable to their success in the world of work and we choose to continue providing these services regardless of their impact on our district "data" because it is good for our students, and these students are residents of our district.

With all of our district secondary programs we average a 40% cohort graduation rate as defined by the federal government. This year's cohort is made up of the students who first entered high school in 2005-06. The cohort is adjusted for students who move into or out of the system, emigrate to another country, or are deceased. Take the number of students in the cohort who graduated with a "regular" diploma within four years and divide that by the total number of students in the cohort to calculate the cohort graduation rate. Students who earn their GED's, adult HS Diplomas, modified diplomas, and those who earn a diploma in four years, plus one day or more, are counted as non-graduates.

With this new definition, Estacada High School's 2009 cohort graduation rate was 62%, which we view as "unacceptable." This rate, by far not the lowest in the state, is 4% lower than the state average and has a lot of room for improvement. Our staff is working hard not only to assist our students in graduating in four years but also to ensure their

“learning.” Below is a brief list of some of the interventions that we will be putting in place starting next year to increase our students’ academic performance:

- Students below the State standard in reading and math will be provided a second course in these subjects to specifically address their areas of weakness.
- Students who are struggling with passing their classes will be placed in a Focused Learning Center period that will provide them with structured guidance to assist them in learning successfully.
- We will be instituting a “Counselor Watch” program in order to identify struggling students as soon as possible.
- We will be starting a “freshman cohort” for next year, where many of our incoming ninth graders will be taught by a team of teachers who communicate regularly, share curriculum, work as a close team to track student progress, and provide connections between the various curriculum areas.

We would like to assure our community that we will continue to improve our programs, curriculum, delivery, and relationships with our students and families in order to increase student learning and success. We are committed to a challenging educational experience and comprehensive experience for all of our students. Our graduation requirements, perhaps some of the highest in the state, will continue to require students to exceed the state requirements and provide excellent learning experiences for all.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Estacada High School, please feel free to contact me. I would love to sit down with you and discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Scott Sullivan
Principal, Estacada High School