Dropout Rates At Redmond High Schools Increase To 4.2%, Highest in Five Years

by Bend Weekly News Sources

According to data released recently by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Redmond High Schoolâ€™s 2004-05 dropout rate matched the state average of 4.2%. This figure represents an increase of 1.9% from the previous year (2003-04) and is above the percentage from each of the past five years.

â€œOur 4.2% dropout rate translates into each graduating class losing twenty percent of its students between eighth and twelfth grades,â€• states Keith Hanson, Curriculum Director. â€œThis figure is unacceptable and we must continue to find ways to keep every one of these students on a path toward graduation.â€•

Edwin Brown Alternative Schoolâ€™s dropout rate was 2.2%, a decrease from its 3.2% rate in 2003-04. Because many alternative schools have rates in the teens or higher, this is an outstanding achievement for Brown.

Oregon state law defines a dropout as a student in grades 9-12 who withdraws from school without receiving a high school diploma, GED certificate, modified diploma, or transferring to another school. Studies from recent years and testimonials from students who have dropped out of school indicate the following reasons for choosing to leave school: poor attendance, lack of personal attention from adults and other students, falling behind in credits, working too many hours per week, pregnancy, expulsion or suspension from school, lack of parental support and perceived irrelevance of coursework. A majority of students drop out of school between the ages of 15 and 17.

â€œClearly this is another indicator that Redmond Highâ€™s goal of graduating all students and having all students meet or exceed the state standards by 2010 is on the right track,â€• comments Jon Bullock, RHS Principal. â€œWe need to maintain a relentless focus on improving student achievement and school culture.â€•

Since 2004-05, the Redmond School District has undertaken a variety of strategies intended to decrease the likelihood of students dropping out of school. These efforts include:

Restructuring the high school toward a small learning communities format increasing the time students spend with teachers and adults during the school day.

Creating additional learning options for students receiving failing grades and falling behind in credit (SUCCESS Academy, VPL).

Developing regional partnerships with local schools and institutions to provide more adult education learning opportunities for students (distance learning, Gateway program, Tech/Prep).

Structuring the curriculum to include an emphasis in service learning, school-to-work and career preparation to help students see the relevance and importance of coursework.

Redesigning the transition programs at the high school and middle schools to help students shift from grade eight to grade nine and from grade five to grade six.

Re-instituting the Teen Pregnancy program that supports young mothers re-entry into the school setting.

Providing a continuum of special services for students needing more time and opportunity to graduate from high school.

â€œOne area in which we are experiencing great success is with the expansion of our Virtual Prescriptive Learning (VPL) program,â€• Bullock said. â€œVPL provides an avenue for students to recover credits not earned in the traditional classroom setting. It is designed for student who might fail a course but might need more time to master the material. Time is one of the great variables in education; some students need more time to achieve. VPL provides us with that opportunity, particularly students who might be at risk of dropping out of school.â€•

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