

## Oregon's dropout rate hits all-time low at 3.7%

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

SALEM, Ore. – State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo announced today that Oregon’s statewide dropout rate for the 2007-08 school year was 3.7%, down from 4.2% last year. The 3.7% dropout rate is the lowest since statewide reporting began in 1991. Oregon defines a high school dropout as a student in grades 9-12 who withdraws from school for example without receiving a high school diploma, GED, modified diploma, or transferring to another school. “In order to be successful in the 21st Century, it is vital that our students graduate from high school,” Castillo said. “This report is good news for students, parents, schools, and communities and demonstrates that our efforts to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates are starting to pay off. We must continue to build on the proven strategies and interventions we know are critical to keeping students in school and on track to graduate.” Increased educational opportunities and prevention programs offering more support for at-risk students and more accurate statewide data have contributed to the decline in dropouts. 2007-08 Dropout Rates and (decrease from prior year) by ethnicity: White 3.0% (-0.5) Asian 2.6% (-0.4) African American 7.0% (-0.1) Hispanic 6.4% (-1.2) Native American 5.8% (-0.7) Total 3.7% (-0.5) These decreases are significant for the Hispanic and Native American populations where the dropout rate decreased 1.2 and 0.7 percentage points respectively. These decreases were greater than the majority white population decrease of 0.5 percentage points which reflects Oregon’s priority to close the achievement gap that separates disadvantaged populations from their peers. A decade ago, the statewide dropout rate stood at 7% and the Hispanic rate was about 18%. The African American rate was nearly 12% and the Native American rate about 10%. Click here for statewide dropout trend data. “Many of our schools have been sharply focused on using data to improve and target instruction for their disadvantaged students. These efforts prove that we can produce more equitable outcomes for our students when we focus on implementing strategies to close the achievement gap,” said Castillo. “This news comes at a time of incredible opportunity to build on our efforts with the federal funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. These funds can be targeted to strengthen our support for at-risk students in danger of failing or dropping out.”

The 2007-08 graduation rate increased from 81.4% for 2006-07 to 84.0% for 2007-08 with most of the gain coming from minority student sub-groups, especially Hispanic and Native American: 2007-08 Graduation Rates and (increase from prior year) by ethnicity: White 87.2% ( 2.4) Asian 89.3% ( 2.1) African American 68.5% ( 0.4) Hispanic 70.5% ( 6.1) Native American 75.5% ( 3.8) Total 84.0% ( 2.6) “The Oregon Diploma is an important initiative underway in our schools to help reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate,” said Castillo. A key component of the Oregon Diploma is identifying those students who need help early and beginning to engage them with targeted instruction and support. “These graduation requirements are tied directly to student interest and aspiration through the personal plan and profile, making high school more relevant. Students see that staying in school and working hard to finish has meaning in their future. The new requirements also allow more flexibility in how students work through high school. In addition, they have more opportunities to explore career options that will help them develop a vision and pathway for their future, said Castillo.” Graduation rate calculations are based on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) formula approved by the U.S. Department of Education: divide the number of graduates with a regular diploma in the school year by the sum of the number of graduates with a regular diploma plus the number of students who dropped out from all grades 9-12 that year. Consistent with federal Title I requirements, starting with the 2009-2010 school year, ODE will be adopting a Cohort Graduation Rate which considers students with a GED as non-graduates. This change will reduce the graduation rate by about 3.5 points. Additional differences such as not counting graduates who need more than 4 years in high school could reduce the rate by another 6.5 points. Summary of 2007-08 Graduation and Dropout Rates As required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, Oregon now provides dropout and graduation rates by Gender, Economically Disadvantaged, Limited English Proficient, Special Education, and Talented & Gifted (TAG). See the online table for these rates.

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