

# Islands of Success:

## Examples of better attention to high schools around Oregon.

### Wilsonville High School's data-driven counseling department helped them boost their graduation rates 10 points in the past year.

Wilsonville High School's on-time graduation rate shot up 10 points from 84.6 percent for the class of 2014 to 94.4 percent for the class of 2015.

School leadership cites their data-driven counseling department as a major contributor to the school's success. All of their counselors work closely with classroom teachers to provide as much support as possible during the school day.

**Most notably, they employ a counselor to monitor the freshman class, ensuring students stay on track to graduation from day one.**

Wilsonville offers a number of programs and services driving student success, including:

- Partnerships with Oregon Institute of Technology & Clackamas Community College so students can earn college credit while in high school, reducing the financial burden of obtaining a degree.
- 'Ninth Grade Accelerated Pathway to Success' and 'Freshman Academies' offer early intervention and support to keep students on the path to earning a diploma. Accelerated Pathways counselors monitor



Stephanie Stuck graduated from Wilsonville High School in June 2015 and currently attends Portland State University

9th graders to ensure they are on track.

- A wide variety of career and technical education programs exposing students to career paths in biomedical health sciences, sustainable agriculture, digital design, engineering and computer science.

### Students in Portland Public Schools' Career and Technical Education Programs Graduate at High Rates, No Matter Their Background

**In Portland Public Schools, 91 percent of CTE students graduated from high school on-time, compared to their overall graduation rate of 67 percent for the 2013-14 school year.**

PPS perfectly demonstrates how we are aware of the programs that work for our high school students, but as a state we have failed to come up with the money.

Career and technical education

PPS GRAD RATES	*CTE 2013-14
DISTRICT	91%
AMERICAN INDIAN	80%
ASIAN	94%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	87%
HISPANIC	93%
WHITE	91%

\*CTE Completers – 2 or more credits in a CTE Program of Study.

programs are the courses providing engaging, meaningful, real-world job skills. They introduce students to careers in manufacturing, construction, computer science, engineering, healthcare, etc.

The state legislature worked to enhance collaboration between K-12 and employers to revitalize new or existing CTE programs. There was tons of support for the idea, but the legislature could only come up with \$18 million.

Unfortunately, Portland Public Schools can only afford to offer these programs to a small fraction of their students.



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## In Eastern Oregon, College-Credit Bearing Courses Put High School Students on a Path to Opportunity...and Then the Program Was Defunded



***In Eastern Oregon, 81 percent of students with “Eastern Promise” credits go on to college, compared to the state average of 56 percent.***

The Eastern Promise program is a combination of dual-credit, AP and other college-level courses offered to K-12 students to increase the number of students who graduate ready for college.

Those who oppose the program complain about adding to high school curriculum in order to satisfy the dual-credit components. They say it’s too high a bar to set for the high school students, and that high school educators cannot skip any of the curriculum that they have, because it is mandated.

Despite its success, the program was recently defunded.

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## Sherwood high school has shown impressive ingenuity with its Career-Technical Education (CTE) program and gives a significant number of students a head start on college coursework.

In 2014, with the aid of a \$490,000 CTE Revitalization Grant from the state, the Sherwood school district enhanced its already impressive STEM program at Sherwood High School. The most notable feature was teacher John Neibergall’s

“Fab Lab”, a mobile fabrication laboratory that allowed Sherwood’s STEM program to hit the road. As the school’s Digital Design and Fabrication instructor, Neibergall purchased an RV and outfitted it with equipment including a vinyl

cutter, 3D printer, laser cutter, and other tools from the school’s in-house manufacturing lab. He travels all over the state, spending about a week at each school, teaching curious and enthusiastic students how to make, for instance,

custom stickers and window clings. When the week is over, Neibergall leaves behind parting gifts, such as a \$2,000 vinyl cutter.

Modern day manufacturing jobs require high tech skills and understanding state of the art machinery, even at the entry level, and Neibergall believes his coursework is a key factor in student engagement as they consider future careers. "As a career technical education teacher working on the front lines," says Neibergall, "I've witnessed how CTE programs engage and motivate students to show up to school each day." And while the Sherwood school district educates a more affluent student demographic, Neibergall knows CTE programs are for everyone. "I've collaborated with CTE programs across our state," he says, "and their value is universal in districts of all sizes and locations."

In addition to Sherwood's vibrant CTE program, its aggressive dual-enrollment partnership with



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**-John Neibergall, Sherwood High School CTE teacher**

Portland Community College has given hundreds of students a solid head start on college coursework. For the school year 2014-2015, 40% of Sherwood High's 1,500 students took advantage of this program, earning 5,782 college

credits while in high school. This amounted to a savings of over \$500,000 in PCC tuition fees.

Sherwood High's graduation rate for 2014-2015 is 92.7%, up from 88.5% in 2011-2014.

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## **McKay High School in Salem proves that drop-out prevention programs work!**

In 2010, the Salem-Keizer school district received a 3-year federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) totaling \$1.95 million to improve student outcomes at McKay High School.

With that money the school established a Tardy Task Force to reduce the frequency of student tardiness, beefed up collaboration among instructors,

and strengthened its connection to parents and community groups. It also included a summer transition program for incoming freshman who have not yet demonstrated the needed skills in reading, writing or math.

### **Outcomes:**

- 32% increase in students scoring proficient in math
- 31% increase in students

scoring proficient in reading

- 6 point increase in graduation rates
- 65% reduction in student tardiness

***It should be noted that the SIG money helped McKay's dropout rate fall to the lowest level of any Oregon high school of its size (.2%). But since the SIG money ran out, the school's dropout rate has risen to 1.9%.***