

## *State of the Schools address*

### Cuts may hinder OC schools' improvement

#### Chuck Clemans reports on CCC

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The good news - Oregon City's schools have been exceeding state averages in test scores across the board and steadily improving on their own over the last few years.

The bad news - the school district's financial troubles that saw the closure of Park Place Elementary last year probably aren't over yet.

That was the message Dr. Roger Rada, the district superintendent gave at the annual state of the school's address last week at **Clackamas Community College**.

Chuck Clemans, a board member at CCC, also explained how the college is putting together programs to help people who've lost their jobs in the recession, and Congressman Kurt Schrader talked about the stimulus and other funds he's pushed to help protect education from more devastating cuts.

Rada attributes the ongoing academic improvement to Professional Learning Communities, in which teachers get together to talk about what's working and what isn't.

"We say we're moving from a teaching model (to a learning model)," Rada said. In the teaching model, "the teacher taught, gave a test, assigned grades, and we did it well enough that we lost a lot of kids in the process."

The learning model, on the other hand, is focused on the students. Teachers discern what they want the students to learn and how they'll know when they've learned it. For the students who aren't getting it, "we're going to bring out some interventions and work with those students until they get it," Rada said.

Still, with the district's financial troubles persisting, Rada said scores could slide.

"In the long run I think it's going to be really tough to get the results we've had the last few years," he said. Elementary music and physical education programs have been reduced, and with teachers picking up those duties they have less time for lesson planning. Supplies are also an issue.

"We're not buying textbooks this year, we didn't buy them last year and we won't buy them for two years at least," he said.

The district cut \$6 million last year and, if tax measures passed by the Legislature are repealed, Rada said they'd have to cut another \$4 million.

"I have no idea where that comes from or where we make up that \$4 million loss," he said.

### CCC helps veterans

Clemans said CCC has been building programs to get people back to work. One of the most publicized is its **graveyard welding class**, running from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. That allows people still working to pick up new skills or improve on the ones they've got. In total the college has 7,014 students enrolled in Workforce Reinvestment Act programs.

"We are committed to putting people back to work and helping students succeed," said Clemans, a former OCSD superintendent.

The school's **Small Business Development Center** is also helping local businesses grow. Clemans mentioned an Oregon City embroidery business that started with 10 embroidery machines. After working with the small business center, they've expanded to around 50 machines.

Still, the school would like to do more, and is considering a second building at the Harmony Community Campus at Harmony Road and SE 82nd Avenue in North Clackamas.

"We may not have suitable space to be offering all the programs we need to be offering in this economic climate," Clemans said.

### Federal funds

Schrader said he was put off by the attitude toward education when he got to Washington, D.C.

"Unfortunately I got the impression when I walked in the door that they don't take education that seriously," he said. "They don't call it education spending, they call it discretionary spending."

But, he said, the current Congress and administration understood the need.

"This Congress gets it, this administration gets it, they understand the importance of investing in education and in our future," he said. And he noted that things would be much worse if it weren't for the stimulus package.

**"Things are tough, Measures 66 and 67 (to repeal the state tax packages) are scary, but I can say, if it weren't for the federal stimulus, it'd be Armageddon."**

The state of the schools address was sponsored by the Oregon City Chamber of Commerce.