



May 26, 2017



Honorable Rod Monroe, Co-Chair
Subcommittee on Education
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Senate
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Honorable Barbara Smith Warner, Co-Chair
Subcommittee on Education
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs Monroe and Smith Warner and Members of the Committee,

At the hearing on May 24 related to Senate Bill 183, Co-Chair Monroe asked about the percent of female students not graduating on time. Here is the data for the last two years:

Percent of Students Not Graduating On-Time

	Male	Female
2014-15 School Year	29%	21%
2015-16 School Year	30%	22%

Co-Chair Monroe also asked why male students are graduating at a lower rate.

I do not believe there is a definitive answer to that question. I do know that when we heard from students, parents, teachers, and community members around the state that they pointed to two issues in particular for boys: Relationships and Relevance. I highlighted few stories/comments below, but you can access the entire report at: http://education.oregon.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ChiefEd_Graduation-Convening-Report_2017_final.pdf.

Relationships:

A student in Southern Oregon told me that his high school graduation coach is like a father to him. The coach not only shared the importance of school and helped him get on-track for graduation, he taught him how to present in front of an audience – the very basics that were missing in his life... how to iron a shirt, tie a necktie, and even how to shave. Many of our students are missing key relationships in their lives, having someone at school who cares can make all the difference. Here are some direct quotes from the report related to boys, relationships, and success in school:

- “The absence of an encouraging figure. When I was a freshman in high school, I found it difficult to be motivated. Some kids don’t have parents who follow them through school. It’d be good if the teachers were more involved in students’ lives. I was myself motivating myself to graduate, and I think it was difficult. Really having a focus on the outreach – it’s really difficult for students to motivate themselves. Now I have a lot of inspirational people in my life that help

me stay motivated. I think people just need other people to keep them going.” (Student, Medford)

- “I think the most important and impacting thing teachers can do is give their students HOPE. Teachers play a bigger role in student’s futures than they know. When teachers believe in you and help you accomplish your goals, you can get so much more from education. But when teachers discriminate or don’t believe in you, students believe there is no hope for them, and they can even begin to stop believing in themselves.” (Student, Portland)
- “It’s like you get in a pattern – if your parents aren’t caring, if you don’t care, if the community doesn’t care – it just seems like nobody has ever really cared. It seems that people are slowly losing the amount of care they have in other classes.” (Student, Coos County)

Relevance:

A teacher in Dufur, Oregon told me that each year he has a group of freshman and sophomore students that fail or nearly fail geometry. Yet in this small school, when he has the same students in his metals/welding CTE class as juniors or seniors and he has them use the Pythagorean Theorem to design, cut, weld, manufacture and install roll bars for their pick-ups, they all suddenly understand geometry. This is relevance in action. Here are some direct quotes from the report related to boys, relevance, and success in school:

- “A typical CTE classroom at the high school is mostly boys. This is because they are largely engaged by this type of course. Men have higher proportions of incarceration, drug use, etc., which is why getting them graduated is so important. The specific group that is struggling is the boys.” (Educator, The Dalles)
- “The boys, especially at the high school level, I think it’s the courses that have been removed. CTE makes sense. These boys are starting to reconnect again. Hopefully with bringing some of these programs back in, it’ll bring some of these boys back.” (Educator, Klamath Falls)
- “With males around here – you can drop out of school and be a fisherman. Or logging. Or other jobs. There are a lot of people that see that or see it in their family and they think ‘why am I wasting my time here?’ And so they go. And sometimes that works out and sometimes it doesn’t.” (Student, Brookings-Harbor)

Sincerely,



Colt Gill
Education Innovation Officer