

Containers play many roles in the garden

UO's proposed baseball facility will consume 400 parking spaces near Autzen Stadium SPORTS, D1

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BREAKING NEWS AT OREGONLIVE.COM

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PORTLAND, OREGON

New FAA audits put travel on standby

Safety | Airlines cancel hundreds more flights as regulators expand inspections through June

By MICHELINE MAYNARD and MATTHEW L. WALD
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Air travelers, whose plans have already been disrupted by thousands of canceled flights recently, may face continued chaos in coming weeks as the Federal Aviation Administration and the airlines expand their scrutiny of passenger planes.

The groundings at such airlines as American, Alaska, Delta and Southwest resulted from a broader round of inspections, ordered by the FAA, to determine whether the airlines have complied with past directives to check airplane structures, wires, electronics and other components.

Passenger questions

American Airlines addresses concerns about canceled flights A9

A second wave of audits began March 30 and will continue through June 30. Laura J. Brown, a spokeswoman for the FAA, said it could not rule out further groundings.

"We don't know," she said. "We find what we find."

That will do little to reassure travelers, who face difficulties switching to other flights because planes are generally flying full on popular routes.

The agency turned up new problems Monday, when nine MD-80 jets operated by American failed an FAA check, prompting it to ground 300 planes. American canceled

Please see **FLIGHTS**, Page A9



PAUL BEATY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chicago's O'Hare International Airport was one of the hardest hit by American Airlines' decision to cancel more than a third of its flights Wednesday. The carrier expects 900 cancellations today and warns that disruptions could spill into Friday.

WEATHER



Mostly cloudy
High: 56
Low: 35

For complete weather, see B8

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Oregon dropout rate climbs

Graduation | Educators look for answers after 8,338 students quit school last year before graduating

By BETSY HAMMOND
THE OREGONIAN

Oregon's high school dropout rate grew worse in 2007, as 8,338 teens quit school before graduation, the state reported Wednesday.

The state pegged the graduation rate at 81 percent for the class of 2007, meaning that 19 percent of students who started high school in Oregon dropped out over their four years of high school.

Oregon's dropout rate, once among the worst in the country, had improved for most of the past decade.

But the trends went the wrong way in 2006-07, as the statewide dropout rate went up and the graduation rate went down. That was true for students in nearly every group, including whites, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and students in special education.

"There is no way a student can expect to be successful in the future if they do not graduate from high school today," said Oregon schools Superintendent Susan Castillo.

Portland's dropout rate rose sharply, Please see **DROPOUTS**, Page A9



FREDRICK D. JOE/THE OREGONIAN

Donovan Cruz, a sophomore at Hillsboro's Century High, is retaking freshman English via a computerized course that allows students who skip school or fail classes to recapture lost credits. "It's a fast way to catch up in the classes you messed up in before," Cruz says. The school boasts a 95 percent graduation rate.

What about your school?

To learn the dropout rates for 500 Oregon high schools, go to The Oregonian's schools guide at <http://blog.oregonlive.com/schoolsguide>.

Metro area high school graduation rates

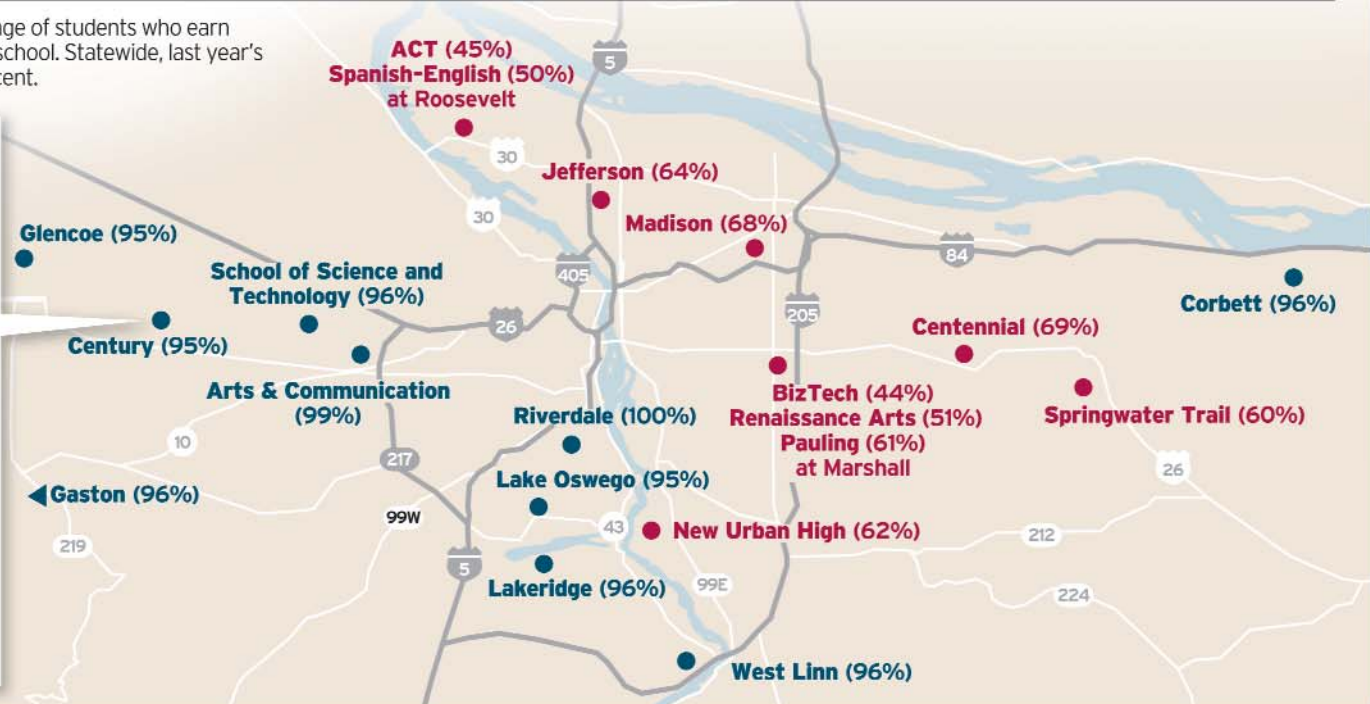
10 best graduation rates 10 worst graduation rates

Graduation rates are the percentage of students who earn diplomas after four years of high school. Statewide, last year's graduation rate was about 81 percent.

Century's success

One in five students at Century High is Latino, the ethnic group with the highest dropout rate. But Century's dropout rate is down to 1 percent. Here are some of its strategies:

- Monitor teens constantly and step in within days when a student skips school or shows other warning signs.
- Reach out to families and offer help such as therapy for depressed teens.
- Put freshmen who need it into an intensive reading class.
- Make it easy for students to catch up on credits.



Source: Oregon Department of Education

STEVE COWDEN/THE OREGONIAN

Smaller Portland schools among worst with dropouts

By LISA GRACE LEDNICER
THE OREGONIAN

Seven of the 10 schools with the worst graduation rates in the metro area are in the Portland School District, and all seven have split into smaller settings to attack chronic dropout and achievement problems.

But Wednesday's dropout report

shows these schools are failing to keep many of their students in school.

"It's like turning the Titanic. You can't turn on a dime," said Charlie La-Tourette, spokesman for Employers for Education Excellence, a nonprofit organization that has championed small schools and given two Portland high schools more than \$1.3 million in

grants. "What's really important is reaching those kids and connecting them to a human being and getting them the support they need."

BizTech, a small school with a business and technology curriculum at Marshall High School, posted the lowest graduation rate in Portland Public Schools at 44 percent. The second-

lowest rate was the Arts, Communication and Technology school within Roosevelt High. Only 45 percent of the students who were supposed to graduate last spring got diplomas.

Marshall and Roosevelt are among 38 small schools across Oregon that have received grants from the Gates Please see **PORTLAND**, Page A9

Torch zigzags to skirt San Francisco protests

Crowds | Demonstrators and spectators alike are denied a chance to see the Olympic flame pass by

By JULIANA BARBASSA and MARCUS WOHLSEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — The Olympic torch played hide-and-seek with thousands of demonstrators and spectators crowding the city's waterfront Wednesday before being spirited away without even a formal goodbye on its symbolic stop in the United States.

After its parade was rerouted and shortened to prevent disruptions by crowds of anti-China protesters, the planned closing ceremony at the waterfront was canceled and moved to San Francisco International Airport. The flame was put directly on a plane and was not displayed.

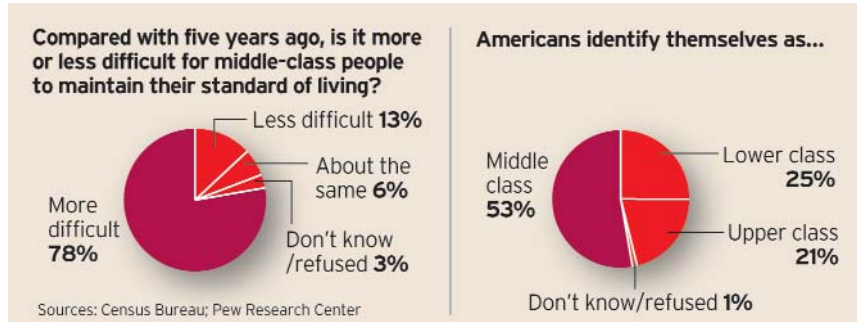
The last-minute changes to the route and the site of the closing ceremony were made amid security concerns following chaotic protests in London and Paris, but they effectively prevented many spectators who wanted to see the flame from witnessing the historic moment.

Please see **OLYMPICS**, Page A4

A pro-Tibet protester yells at pro-China demonstrators as they wait for the Olympic torch relay to pass in San Francisco. The torch route was changed at the last minute.



NOAH BERGER ASSOCIATED PRESS



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Middle class not what it used to be, Americans say

More middle-class Americans say they aren't better off than they were five years ago, reflecting economic pressures amid growing personal debt, a study released Wednesday found.

Their short-term assessment of personal progress, according to the study, is the worst it has been in nearly half a century.

The survey by the Pew Research Center, a Washington-based organization, paints a mixed picture for the 53 percent of adults who define themselves as "middle class," those with household incomes ranging from below \$40,000 to more than \$100,000. Some key findings:

- A majority of all Americans say they haven't progressed in the past five years. One in four, or 25 percent, said their economic situation had not improved, while 31 percent said they had fallen backward. Among the middle class,

54 percent said they had made no progress (26 percent) or fallen back (28 percent).

• Fifty-three percent of middle-class people said they had to cut spending because money was tight. Nearly one in five, or 18 percent, said they had trouble getting or paying for medical care, while 10 percent reported they had been laid off or otherwise lost their jobs.

• Nearly eight in 10 of all people, or 79 percent — 78 percent of those who consider themselves middle class — said they believe it has become more difficult compared with five years ago for the middle class to maintain their standard of living, up from 65 percent in 1986.

• Among the middle class, no consensus existed on who was to blame for their economic problems. Twenty-six percent blamed the government, 15 percent faulted the price of oil and 11 percent said the people themselves were responsible.