

Corbett Charter School
35800 E Historic Columbia River Hwy
Corbett, OR 97019



Dear Friends,

Hope you are preparing for a good Spring Break. We are headed out of town for a few days and plan to return refreshed and ready to go! So, what's new?

There is a buzz going around Corbett about accreditation. (I know because a friend of a friend forwarded me a funny email...the modern grapevine!) I thought that the topic might raise questions for you, so here is my take:

Accreditation is a peculiar sort of protection racket...just like back in the neighborhood. Schools pay an agency to testify that they are a good school. And they agency urges member schools to deny the value of non-member schools. A club.

Here are the steps involved:

1. A school pays a fee for accreditation.
2. The accrediting body requires that the school fill out forms.
3. The accrediting body tells the school what it is doing wrong and how to 'fix' it.
4. The school changes its operation to meet the accreditation standards (or gets a waiver).
5. The accrediting agency agrees to tell anyone who asks that the school is indeed accredited (and therefor good, regardless of any lack of results).
6. Repeat step one. Annually.

The value added for the school? Advertising. A line on the school's web page.
The value added for the students? Nothing. That's it.

Who cares about accreditation? Well, let's look at who doesn't. Harvard doesn't care, and neither does the recent Corbett grad who graduated from that magnificent institution. Dartmouth doesn't care, and neither does the Charter alum who is finishing up her freshman year. University of Southern California doesn't care. Nor do Smith, Vassar, Baylor, University of Pennsylvania, Reed, Oregon State, University of Oregon, Lewis and Clark, Univeristy of Portland, Western Oregon, Southern Oregon or Eastern Oregon Universities. George Fox doesn't care, nor do Willamette, MHCC, The United State Air Force, the U.S. Navy, the Army, the Marines, or the Coast Guard. In twelve years not a single student has reported any problems with admission due to lack of 'accreditation'.

Nearly a dozen years ago, when I recommended that Corbett stop paying money for accreditation, I not only researched the question but I asked everyone I knew to come up with a single school that cared. Nobody ever did.

There may be a misguided scholarship committee out there that thinks that accreditation matters. But the vast majority of financial aide that is awarded to students

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is administered by the colleges and universities that they attend...the same schools that don't care about accreditation.

Corbett Charter School is about results. It's not about advertising. It's not about 'accreditation'. It's about achievement. And by any measure, Corbett Charter School outperforms virtually every accredited school in Oregon. And those who perform better would never claim that it was due to 'accreditation'. (And they would laugh at the suggestion!)

Preparing students for higher education has been my professional passion for some twenty years. There is very little that I wouldn't do to help our kids gain access to the very best opportunities after high school. Accreditation? It is a costly strategy that would move us not one inch in that direction. And with our results, we don't need an accreditation agency to validate our practices.

Anyways, just some parting thoughts until we meet up again after the Break. Be well. If the kids get too **notalgic** for school, let them do some math.

Warm Regards,

Bob Dunton
Corbett Charter School

Hi, All,

Ninety-seven percent of Corbett Charter School's 11th graders have passed the Oregon High School Reading Assessment this year, as have one hundred percent of our 12th graders. We are currently at 90% in High School Math, 86% in Science and 93% in Writing. These high school results will likely rank among the very top in the state.

In our first three years of operation, Corbett Charter will graduate a total of 64 students. 75% have taken the SAT (the state average is about 54%) and they have averaged 1124 math/verbal combined. (The State average will be about 1060.) This year's class, the largest to date, has a participation rate of 78% and an average test score of 1137. It is the strongest class that I have seen in my career. Our students so far have gained entry to Dartmouth, Stanford, Baylor, USC, OSU, U of O, Willamette, Linfield, Lewis and Clark, MHCC, PSU, Warner Pacific, University of Portland...you know the list.

But today, one of our 9th graders who is attempting to transfer to Sam Barlow High School in the Gresham Barlow School District is having her transcript questioned as Sam Barlow decides whether to honor the credits that she earned at Corbett Charter School. Good enough for Stanford but not for Sam Barlow? In what universe can this possibly make sense? (Some of you just checked the email address to make sure that this isn't Kafka, but it's just me!)

Remember my note about **Accreditation** being a protection racket? Well, there it is. There have been any number of students moving back and forth between Gresham and Corbett over the past decade (I can remember when a Corbett student was their star running back! Another was a varsity cheerleader.) and our students were never questioned. Corbett hasn't been accredited for that entire period. But now that we have a charter school, accreditation is everything. What else changed? Nothing. Barlow has had access to the list of accredited schools every year. If accreditation was really an issue, they had ample opportunity to act on it. This year it somehow matters. And one family is being targeted to bear the entire weight of Gresham Barlow's spite.

Is 'spite' perhaps too strong a word? I'm not sure. Gresham Barlow School District paid an attorney (to be fair, they shared the bill with Reynolds) to see if there was a way to block the formation of Corbett Charter School before we even opened our doors. They accused us in the press of 'cannibalizing' their district. They did all of this while they were designing their own online charter 'school', which they insisted would only serve in-district students. Of course now it accepts students from throughout the region without regard for residency, but somehow I suspect that they don't see that as cannibalism!

Accreditation is, in fact, a protection racket. It allows a SATISFACTORY (according to the State of Oregon's report card) program to take the 'high' ground by claiming a single point of supposed superiority (even though accreditation is like a trophy that you go out and buy at the local grocery store without actually going out and winning anything...)

By any measure, be it the Oregon Report Card, SAT participation rates and average SAT scores, Advanced Placement (Barlow is calling into question, among other classes, two 9th grade AP classes that are audited annually by the College Board, who we *don't* pay to approve us!), Adequate Yearly Progress, graduation rates, any standard measure of achievement, Corbett Charter School simply achieves at a conspicuously higher level. No wonder 'protection' is a hot commodity!

I have known some tremendous teachers and administrators in Gresham Barlow School District. Many of them are committed educators who do tremendous work. If they know about their district playing 'payback' at the expense of a 15-year-old school girl, I know that they are mortified. I hope that if any of you reside in the Gresham Barlow District, you will consider letting your elected board members know your feelings regarding their disregard for the rights of parents to choose a charter school without having to face possible retaliation down the road.

That's it. 'Nuff said. Needs to stop. Maybe you can help.

Bob

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Charter School

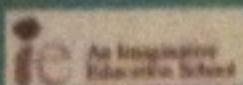
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