

Corbett Oregon

Information, questions, concerns and comments about the School District in Corbett

National ranking

Where did Corbett go?

National Ranking from Newsweek has played a large part in growing our district's size and reputation. It has been used to persuade the public, our parents and board members to trust administration and allow the expansion of our school population, the implementation of non-traditional educational practices; Imaginative Education and the creation and expansion of at least one Charter School in Corbett.

The criteria at Newsweek was upgraded in 2011, to look at 6 vs. 3 components of what equates to a school's overall success.

This National Ranking is based on total AP tests taken (it does not matter if the tests are passed) divided by numbers of graduates. Corbett is an all AP high school. We give tests for kids 9-12 and in the case of the Charter, we graduate less than 40 kids a year. (\$50,000 plus a year for AP where only 25% of those tests are passed.)

While the merit and importance of a healthy AP program is not up for debate, using taglines like "Best in the Nation" to describe our schools, when the ranking index is based heavily on the number of AP tests taken, not passed, is simply disingenuous. **Read more here:** <http://corbettpost.com/news/newsweek>

CSD Grading Policies

No grades. No problem?

In Corbett Schools we do not assign grades in K-8. This was just recently adjusted on board policy to match what we have been doing for some time now.

In Corbett high school we do not assign D's and F's. This seems to unfairly and artificially inflate how well we are doing as a school especially in regards to our graduation rates. (Seniors graduate by a determination in how hard they try, and if they improved from the beginning of the year, according to the Superintendent.) **This will be a huge problem for CSD to overcome if we plan to pursue accreditation.**

A teacher told her 9th grade class in early 2012 that 75% had incompletes. She was so frustrated she insisted the kids start teaching themselves. (This information came home with students and upset parents.)

A community member hired a tutor to help the "in-district" kids to learn outside of school hours at the Grange. **In response, CSD began offering "extra help" on Fridays for kids needing it.**

A "D" or an "F" can help identify students that could use extra help OR possibly even help administrators determine when a teacher might benefit from better teaching strategies to help more kids find success.

Imaginative Education

IE does not include "the basics"

"The current national preoccupation with 'the basics' is the foundation of every failing school in America. Everybody is focusing on the basics. The results are not impressive. "

The above quote can be found on the CSD Web Site explaining the educational philosophies of CCS. And, in fact, Corbett does not include instruction on the basics of writing or math school wide.

While many parents are highly motivated to send their children to Corbett for this non-traditional educational model, we should all be fair minded enough to realize that not all students have that same support network at home to find success in the same way.

Imaginative Education was founded by Dr. Kieran Egan, a Canadian who has written many books on his alternative educational philosophies. CSD has employed Imaginative Education for several years even prior to the Charter being formed. Mr. Egan now sits on the Corbett Charter Board of Directors with Mr. Bob Dunton and Mrs. Sheri Dunton. Bob Dunton's Charter in Corbett is now part of a new book that Mr. Egan is working on that will focus on 'Whole Schools Projects'. In CCS, it would be the studies on the Columbia River Gorge. **You can read more about IERG here:** <http://corbettpost.com/csd/imaginative-learning/imaginative-learning/>

Blended Classrooms

Our schools consist of blended classrooms. CSD had K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 blends prior to the Charter, with the middle school 7-8. Most families here found that a successful model.

With the creation of the Charter we moved to copy their larger classroom blends. Currently the district is K-2 and 3-5 in elementary and 6-8 at the middle. (The Charter left their 6th graders at the Elementary.) *As a note, next year the Charter is returning to a two grade blend at the Elementary level.*

There are certainly parents and community members in Corbett that feel the school administration and school board has worked privately, or perhaps not 'publicly' enough, over the years to implement this educational model and to expand our district so fast.

We will soon have more out of district students than those that live in Corbett. The numbers seem to point to around 650 out of district students and cars on our road every day after Springdale opens.

The voters have voiced their opinion by replacing 4 school board members in the last 2 elections with at least two running on the platform of "more transparency".

Reading assessments

Third grade reading scores

Our school district placed in the bottom 150 of all schools in the State of Oregon for our 3rd grade reading scores for 2011. We have been encouraged to dismiss these tests, and to focus on the tests from our higher grades.

The Oregon Education Investment Board, OEIB, chaired by the Governor, has just approved Achievement Compacts this month (March 2012) that includes third grade reading, as measured by OAKS, as one key measurement of our school's success.

" If students are reading at grade level in the third grade, they're more likely to graduate from high school -- and high school graduates are less likely to serve time." - Ben Cannon from Governor Kitzhaber's office

Corbett enrolls many students who were home schooled and/or privately schooled from outside our district in our higher grades. These students perform very well on tests overall. It is disingenuous to take the credit for all of these test results, and use them as "proof" that our non-traditional methods in the grade school are working for all our students.

Read more here:

<http://corbettpost.com/csd-numbers>

The State weighs in

And what does the state say?

Bob Dunton, our past Superintendent and current Director of the Corbett Charter, was listed as the consultant for a School that was trying to open in Cascade Locks as a new Charter.

This Charter model had been denied twice by the Hood River School District Board, so they appealed to the State of Oregon. The State of Oregon denied the educational model.

The CSD School Board, at the time, not only approved our Charter School Model but expanded and extended it last May, (after "two comprehensive executive sessions") in a vote of 5-2. (This was just months after this report was available and less than 2 years into the original Charter agreement.) It was expanded to allow for 510 out of district students and until 2014 with no review of the performance of the Charter or any public discussion on the vote.

It should be noted that much of the model the state denied is employed in all Corbett School District programs.

Read the report here:

<http://corbettpost.com/a-charter-school-in-cascade-locks/>

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Going and Growing Corbett School's population growth

In early 2009 we added a Charter School to alleviate a crisis. This **added 245 out of the area students to the district**, most of these students were home schooled or privately schooled. This Charter was implemented in "record time" according to Bob Dunton and according to Randy Trani they had been discussing it for years.

On March 9, 2011 our school board extended and expanded the Charter Contract (after "two comprehensive executive sessions") to **add another 150 or so students from out of district. The Resolution was added to the agenda for a vote by the board the day before the meeting.**

Most recently our school board approved a million dollar loan to refurbish Springdale School and bring in **another 220 plus out of district students** to backfill seats from any local students that choose to move to Springdale. (vote of 5-2)

Our District Financials Corbett's roller coaster ride

Last year at this time (in the spring of 2011) we were receiving "Dooms Day" scenarios from the district. The CSD and Corbett Education Foundation were asking parents to write checks and send them in to match whatever amount those of us that voted for the levy would have spent annually had it passed.

We were told we would be cutting 10 days at the end of the year, deeply hurting our teachers because this shortfall was not at all planned for. The Charter, on the other hand, was financially sound.

This all stemmed from missing money in the budget, somewhere around \$650,000. It was discovered and shared with the school board in an emergency board meeting, on the very last day to place a levy on the ballot. (According to the minutes of that meeting: " Dr. Trani estimated we have \$725,000 shortfall.")

It was originally explained as a computer glitch by the Superintendent. Ultimately it was blamed on State Funding, which was likened to "Black Magic" in the Superintendent's slide show presentation to the community on September 14, 2010. You can see a copy of this slide show and read more here: <http://corbettpost.com/news/levy-info/>

After the Levy failed, our school board ultimately decided to extend and expand the Charter School. (This vote after "two comprehensive executive sessions") and the Resolution was added to the agenda for a vote by the board the day before the meeting. (We lost our grade school library in that move, since we had no more classroom space after giving the last seats we had to the Charter.)

Our School Board should expect our district to 'close the loop of communication', and stamp out any rumors, by offering the truth and the explanation of that situation to the public.

Springdale School Going and growing - part two

Premature to having permission to begin construction from Multnomah County, a conditional use permit, or even actual physical seats available, the Corbett School Board is holding a special board meeting on April 4, 2012 in part to vote on allowing more students into our district next year.

Although our two newest board members had asked to review information listing concerns from the County about the application for the Springdale School, they were only provided it once directly requested from the County. According to land use planner, Don Kienholz, the application could possibly be for another Charter School. Or at least he was quoted as saying that: " ... it is possible they are applying for a charter school although the title of their application has not explicitly said as much. " Also, the County Transportation Specialist he spoke to indicated it was her understanding it was a charter school as well.

This is certainly *not the impression* the school board has been giving the public (nor the impression the Superintendent has been giving the board.) So hopefully it is something that can be tightened up in the language and is not an issue. Read more about the Springdale School here: <http://corbettpost.com/news/springdale-million-dollar-loan/>

While many of us in the community appreciate the idea of saving and refurbishing the Springdale School, we also feel the School Board has been less than honest with the community in explaining that this will mean another 200 plus cars on our small rural roads each morning and afternoon.

Superintendent Trani's plan includes paying back the million dollar loan for Springdale with the revenue from at least 220 new out of district kids and grants. The reality is that our taxpayers have been straddled with a lot of debt (now adding a million dollar loan to that debt with this Springdale School Project.) Our schools continue to expand even when community members have presented petitions and letters asking for them to slow down.

Accreditation A difference of opinion?

Bob Dunton, our previous Superintendent and the current Director of the Corbett Charter School, chose not to continue Accreditation for CSD when he was hired. The last school year we were accredited was 1999/2000. We would have been accredited for 75 years at this point had this not been removed.

Recently Mr. Dunton sent a letter to parents in the Charter. You can read the full letter here: <http://corbettpost.com/csd/is-csd-accredited/> - In part it reads: "**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.**" -Mr. Bob Dunton, Director of the Corbett Charter School

Besides providing parents regular information about whether or not the school is meeting standards it also provides confidence (and justification) when a school and school's programs are regularly evaluated. It ensures there is always a plan for improvement. No school is perfect and we can all work towards making things better for everyone.

"One has to ask the question, if accreditation was not very desirable, why are 98% of the private high schools in Oregon and approximately 90% of the public high schools in Oregon accredited. " -Dr. Richard Darst, Director for the Northwest Accreditation Commission

The information on this handout and at the Corbett Post web site have been provided by Mindy Schmidt, who lives in Corbett Oregon and is a parent of two students in the School District. " As the creator and administrator of the Corbett Oregon community web site for the past 10 plus years (<http://corbettoregon.com>) I have had a unique perspective in regards to local events and discussions in Corbett. There has been no other topic on the Corbett Forum that has inspired more activity than the changes happening in the Corbett School District. This handout is meant to provide some background and detail to issues as they relate to the Corbett School District. Please use the contact information on the Corbett Post site if you feel that something listed is not accurate or needs clarification. You can also download this as a pdf from the <http://www.corbettpost.com> web site. This pdf and a letter was sent to the Corbett School Board on 3/29/2012. No response has been received from the school board to this date (5/15/12). This pdf was updated on 5/15/2012 as explained on this web page: <http://corbettpost.com/public-letters/a-recap-of-some-of-the-issues/>