

WLS

Assessment in the news, or at least in the outside world:

- 1) airplane wheels; 2) prospective sons-in-law; 3) replay cameras in high-stakes NBA games

Maggie

Food for thought: The difference between assess/assessing (verb, gerund) and assessment (noun, but still process?) Can there be assessment without an assessment?

The Commencement Speaker (BA/MA/MFAs in fine arts/ art history): 1) use th big tool / idea; 2) learn to write; 3) never take a real job

↳ "so what?" "sense of purpose"

From my email en route:

We simply must get further into assessing writing. Oops! What about handwriting in L2?

world class

But also Oregon standards - see the reading items linked to the previous Tuesday meeting.

But absolutely - because of a question raised by one of you - we must discuss the page length of the FOPI assignment. Here it may help to remember what that American folk hero and wise man Abraham Lincoln replied when asked: Abe, how long should a man's legs be? (Length and purpose of written FOPI analyses)

Might we agree on a single language activity as the basis of Assignment 4 (create a scoring guide?)

Scoring guide for teamwork (or is it something more than that?)

prof level of kashers/profs.

Big Idea
from page 56.

WebCAPE

NCLB

Oregonian May 5, 2011 B8

On a collision course at Portland's Grant High

There is no villain at Grant High School in Northeast Portland, no person to blame for the unhappiness over student schedules, and no simple lever to pull and fix the problem.

There is only a vague sense that Grant symbolizes the dilemma at the heart of Portland Public Schools: How do you serve the "haves" and the "have-nots" simultaneously, on a tight budget, without messing up things for all kids?

The district hasn't figured this out yet. I don't think the community has come to terms with the challenge, either.

Grant High enjoys a good reputation as a strong school with great parent support, excellent extracurriculars and an enviable array of Advanced Placement classes. Less known is the chasm at Grant between students who excel and those who flounder and drop out — a chasm that exists districtwide.

"Sadly, this tends to break down by socioeconomic and racial lines," says Principal Vivian Orlen. "It's a national embarrassment."

Orlen wants to beef up support for struggling students. At the same time, she faces more budget cuts, plus multiple other factors beyond her control: class sizes that are already

on the high side, an indirect cap on school enrollment, a teacher contract that governs workload, plus a funding formula that favors higher-poverty schools.

Put all this together, and Orlen has proposed limiting the number of AP classes that seniors can take — as well as their total class load.

Needless to say, some parents are freaking out.

One mom says parents feel blindsided by the class restrictions. Another mom, Kaarin Smith, says her family has transferred her younger teenager to a private school for next year. Parent Kristen Jones, who has watched Grant for years through her kids, says she strongly supports the principal and staff but worries about the school's direction.

Her kids have long faced large class sizes and stretched-thin teachers, Jones says, but "I have never seen anything as bad as it is now."

Last week, Portland district leaders told high schools to switch to an eight-period block schedule and to limit most students to seven classes. Parents are unhappy about the prospect of less instructional time. Grant's limits may be more severe: Seniors may be restricted from taking more than three AP classes — and perhaps no more than six total classes, unless

they need the credits to graduate. One of those classes would likely be a glorified study hall.

Orlen cautions that the schedule remains in flux and the district's budget isn't final. She also sympathizes with parents' frustrations, even as she grows impatient with the armchair quarterbacking.

"I've come to appreciate what parents have had to deal with," she says. "They feel that every year, something has been taken from them."

But she asks some provocative questions: What *should* four years of high school look like? How many classes *should* Oregon provide once students have fulfilled their graduation requirements? Why is a class considered worthy only if there is an "AP" or "IB" label attached to it? What is the fairest way to spread finite resources?

Anyone? Bueller?

The situation brewing at Grant isn't new to Portland. Students at Portland's lower-income high schools have dealt for years with limited access to AP classes and various limits on their choices. They simply lack Grant's megaphone.

Also, Grant will still be a good school with excellent opportunities for kids, even if it must trim its course menu. In some ways, Grant might be better. So I don't share the apocalyptic

views of the most-upset parents.

However, these parents bring up a troubling issue: Portland may be inching toward part-time high school to help balance the budget. That translates to less classroom time for everyone — including kids in the middle who are neither star students nor singled out for special help. Taken too far, the limits on classes will lead to students who are less competitive in college applications and less prepared for college itself.

"Portland Public Schools is full of wonderful teachers and counselors, and they've been able to do great things," says Eric Delehoj, a college-admissions consultant who advises Portland-area families. He says his "jaw dropped" over the proposed limits at Grant.

"My worry is that PPS is going to get a reputation for being less rigorous than other districts," he adds. "I hope they find a solution that is fiscally responsible that doesn't hurt the students."

What that solution looks like is a matter of opinion.

Or in Grant's case, a thousand opinions.

Associate editor Susan Nielsen can be reached at 503-221-8153 or snielsen@oregonian.com. Share your thoughts on Nielsen's blog at www.oregonlive.com/nielsen/.



SUSAN NIELSEN