

CLINTON SCHOOLS

Grad rate exceeds trend

Dropouts decreasing at CHS

BY BRENDEN WEST

Assistant Editor

CLINTON — The Iowa Department of Education on Wednesday released its 2014 school year graduation and dropout statistics. The data points to a continual upward trend for the Clinton Community School District.

Districts throughout the state averaged a 90.5 percent graduation rate overall, a 2.2 percent increase over a fouryear period dating back to 2010. As it pertains to Clinton Schools, Superintendent Deb Olson said her district is closing the gap on the state average. Meanwhile, the district is improving its graduation at three times the clip of the rest of the state.

"Graduation rate is one of those important benchmarks we're always looking at," Olson said. "It tells the tale of what we're doing at the high school. It's not the only mark but it's very important to us."

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GRAD

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In 2010, CCSD graduated 270 out of 342 students, a 78.95 percent rate. Last year, 220 out of 254 students received diplomas - 86.61 percent. It reflects a 7.66 percent increase over a fouryear span.

Olson also was proud of the district's yearover- year numbers. The 2013 data shows an 82.8 percent graduation rate, meaning CCSD grew by 3.81 percent in less than a year.

Dropouts also reflect a positive change.

CCSD's total dropouts fell from 74 to 64 this year, a nearly 1 percent decrease.

As for why this is happening, Olson said it's because educational methods like Professional Learning Communities and Response To Intervention are continuing to have a major impact on student success.

"Kids are monitored on a daily basis," said Olson, as opposed to the former approach to compiling data on a quarterly basis. "Before, a child might fall apart after two weeks in the semester. That's not happening anymore. We're trying to place as many interventions to help these students succeed." Olson also credited staff, which has embraced new learning methods. Education is a field that is constantly evolving. The statistics continue to show that Clinton Schools are placing themselves in front of new trends.

"I think the expectations from our staff are clearly being seen by our kids," Olson said. "Everybody has a piece in this. It's not just one group of individuals. " Graduation and dropout are something that will continue to be a focus for the district, Olson added. But the upward trends have her "looking on the horizon " for other ways to improve her schools.

Staff is working to position the increasing number of graduates on the path to postsecondary education.

Olson said that's why Clinton High is offering more college credit courses and making attempts to incorporate more technology into the curriculum.

"The big thing is that we don't just sit and stay the course," Olson said. "You always have to evolve... Think about how your profession has evolved. If you don't evolve then you're not going to be successful.

It's always a process of looking forward, and you have to see what's on the horizon." Even so, Wednesday 's announcement is encouraging for administration. Olson is looking forward to continuing this upward trend.

"This is the largest jump we've had in four years," she said. "To be able to see the growth that our students are doing does me very proud." *Assistant Editor Brenden West can be contacted at brendenwest@clintonherald.com.*

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