

MAYOR'S SPACE

"Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable."

- Mark Twain

The government tooth fairy has given us another wash of high school graduation rates to worry over. The latest wave of numbers to hit our beach appeared a couple of weeks ago in the Itemizer-Observer to include a 4-year graduation rate for Dallas of 66%. If I remember my high school math correctly, apparently 1 out of 3 of our high school folks don't seem to graduate. Can it be?

Graduation rates are an important bellwether of the health of a community. Like it or not, these pesky statistics are one of the economic indicators used by industry and commerce, convincing them where to locate or expand their businesses. If a community has low graduation rates and let's say, a threadbare County law enforcement system, who wants to set down their taproot in a place like that?

Thus our City Manager Ron Foggini and I met with the leadership of the school district, parsing through the numbers with them for over an hour to get a handle on all this. I have to say, I went into the meeting a little distressed (66%!!) but auspiciously, came out pretty happy.

Importantly, our school leaders care a lot about our students as individuals, not simply as a statistical cohort. And, if you take out all the feathers and fuss with all the different categories and footnotes and other oddball stuff that I think most rational people would not consider germane, then factor in our superb five-year Chemeketa program, our 5-year graduation rate comes out right on up there at 87%. Compared to the State average of 75%, that's a pretty happy number, 87%. This is backed up by our low, low Dallas High dropout rate of just 2%, much better than the State average of 3.95% or the national average of 7%.

Of course, we locals all think we can do even better than an 87% graduation rate. So, that's our challenge and our opportunity as a community to achieve an even higher number and push back at those tooth fairies who periodically drop those low numbers on our pristine beach. **Go Dragons!**

