

# State cuts felt by children



Head Start pupil Simika Lewis brushes her teeth with teachers and classmates following lunch on Monday at the program located at Bend High School.

## Oregon gets bad grade on report card for kids' well-being from advocacy group

By Julia Lyon  
The Bulletin

The children on the school playground may sound thrilled with life, but their lives may be increasingly difficult, according to new data from the nonprofit Children First for Oregon.

In the group's annual review of Oregon's children's well-being, the overall grade dropped to a D+ in 2004, the lowest grade since the group began the review in 1992. In 2003, the grade had fallen to a C-.

While Oregon's economy has

struggled, the state has had fewer dollars to invest in insurance, childcare and other prevention programs, leaving the state's children more at risk, according to the Children First report. The state received its lowest grade within the report card in the area of family financial stability, which encompasses child poverty, housing, hunger, unemployment and child support.

Based in Portland, the nonprofit describes itself as the state's leading voice for children.

The organization employs education, research and community building initiatives to communicate with the Legislature, the media and the public.

Its annual report card reflects the status of children's health, education, safety and families' financial stability.

Dramatic state budget cuts have impacted children, said Dan Peddycord, the Deschutes County public health director.

"This report card is sort of a 10,000-foot reflection of all of

those real-life things that are going on in Oregon," he said. "We don't have the programming we had four years ago."

The budget of the local Commission on Children and Families, which provides dollars to community nonprofits, is about 50 percent of what it was four years ago, Peddycord said. Some health programs have not suffered as much because of their reliance on federal, not state dollars.

See **Grade** / A10