

# Teen

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er spent 15-20 minutes every day, before and after school, teaching her favored lamb to strut correctly.

“You start leading them around a bit, then you can start picking their head up, and you gotta pull back here on their tail, their dock, and that’ll make them go forward,” she said as she wiggled and maneuvered Chippy into position.

“When they’re all slouched over, they just look like a bowl of jelly that doesn’t want to be there,” she said. “But when they look like they’re walking because they’re a million bucks, then they look pretty.”

Ferschweiler has been competing with sheep since she was 9. She was raised on her family’s farm in Silverton, so animals are ingrained in who she is.

With her three show sheep arranged around her in the front yard, Ferschweiler reeled one in as she kept an eye on the others, making sure



Dresen Ferschweiler, 13, stands with her Dorset sheep Chippy. Dresen will show Chippy at the Oregon State Fair.

they didn’t wander into the garage and eat the dog food. She wore a shirt from the Marion County Lamb and Wool Show.

One of her sisters, sitting outside nearby, wore a shirt which read “I (heart) sheep.” But she, and Ferschweiler’s other sister, were soon called

away by their mom to head to the barn for daily chores. That’s pretty standard at the farm, said their mother, Amy Ferschweiler.

Dresen “had to go with me to do chores morning and night,” Amy Ferschweiler said of her eldest. “From the time she was

old enough to hold the bottle to feed them.”

But, according to Amy Ferschweiler, the three girls don’t mind. They enjoy the work.

“You can take their electronics away, no TV, they didn’t give a rip. One time, I’m like ‘Keep it up, and you won’t go do

chores with me,” she said. “They were all standing at the utility room door with these big old alligator tears rolling down their eyes because I wouldn’t let them go with me.”

Amy Ferschweiler and her husband grew up on farms. It was a no-brainer for them to move to this 30-acre plot in Silverton once they’d married.

“I grew up on a farm. He grew up on a farm,” she said. “It’s just the way it is.”

Amy Ferschweiler grew up around sheep as well, and her father was a pig farmer before that. She said it’s tough to shake the family tradition, even if she or the girls had wanted to.

“It’s a genetic disease, is all I can say,” she said. “It’s a life-long commitment, and I can’t get rid of it.”

It doesn’t seem like Dresen Ferschweiler has any interest in changing that.

Ferschweiler wants to be a large-animal veterinarian when she gets out of school. There’s still a long way to go, but the thought gets her through the day-to-day. She said she wants to end up back

on a farm when she can. “I don’t really see myself sitting in an apartment with a cat or something,” she said. “I can’t live there my whole life, it would drive me crazy.”

Ferschweiler will begin her eighth grade year in the fall, following up a 4.0 GPA through seventh grade. But as far as she’s concerned, her work is at home.

“All the homework gets annoying,” she said with a heavy sigh. “I’m like ‘Come out and try waking up at 5:30 and going outside when it’s only 50 degrees out!’”

A 5:30 a.m. wake-up is standard for Ferschweiler during the school year. Between taking care of the animals in the morning and afternoon, and school and homework in between, she doesn’t rest much during the day. Luckily, the sheep, horses, goats, chickens, dogs and even “all the stupid cats” make for good company.

“If you can get lonely with these people, that’s amazing,” she said, gesturing to the sheep nuzzling against her leg. “If you could, I’d give you 10 bucks.”

# P.E.

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just the requirements.

Senate President Peter Courtney strongly supported the higher standards, but testified that, “we would be hurting our schools if we let these requirements go into effect in July.”

So the Legislature extended the deadlines and adjusted some of the requirements during its recently ended session.

The additional P.E. time for elementary students can be phased in now through the 2020-21 school year. Middle schools need to reach 225 minutes by 2022-23.

Officials and teachers said the reasons schools couldn’t meet the deadline included the recession, a nationwide teacher shortage, limited state funding and inadequate facilities.

Even with the extension, educators are worried students will, again, not get sufficient physical education.

“Things will stay the same ... unless there is more money,” warned Peggy Frantz-Geddes, the new P.E. teacher at Salem-Keizer’s Englewood Elementary.

## More change needed

Minot Cleveland of Legacy Health and the

P.E. For All Kids Coalition has fought for P.E. standards for more than 25 years. He said the 2007 legislation was already a “painful compromise” because it would mean 10 years more before reaching their goals.

Even with all the work done this session with various agencies and advocates of physical education, it still means more time. He said this especially impacts traditionally marginalized students.

As of 2017, the average number of P.E. minutes in Oregon elementary schools is roughly half of the American Heart Association’s recommendations; the average for middle schools is about two-thirds of the recommendations.

Cleveland said the state’s best data suggests students who are low income or students of color typically get 15-20 percent less time compared to their more affluent and white counterparts.

Advocates like Cleveland have been pushing for the Oregon Department of Education to take a closer look at the reasons behind this, but he said one of the reasons could be lower-income and minority-majority districts shifted resources away from physical education in the midst of No Child Left Behind in an attempt to improve test scores.

“It’s a real issue of fairness and social justice,”

he said. “No matter your race, parent income or zip code, you should get the right dose of P.E.”

This also pertains to access to equipment, with some Title I school teachers in Salem-Keizer saying they don’t have access to amplification systems or microphones like wealthier schools in the district.

“If you don’t have (good) health, students won’t do well in other subjects,” Cleveland said. “So we really need to make (it) a higher priority.”

Physical education has been shown to help children prevent numerous conditions, including abnormal cholesterol, high blood pressure, hyperglycemia, obesity and heart disease as well as non-communicable diseases and mental health problems, according to the American Heart Association. Cleveland added physical movement helps with behavioral issues and helps students stay more focused, engaged and on task.

“P.E. is so much about the social aspect — how to disagree, why rules are important, how to integrate literacy, math, nutrition,” Rhonda Herbert, a P.E. teacher at Myers Elementary in Salem, said. “It’s so much more than physical.”

Multiple studies have shown if schools cut back time in P.E. to use elsewhere, it doesn’t help students academically. “The science is all there, but we need to wait a little longer,” Cleveland said. One of the largest obstacles is the notion that P.E. is not a core subject, it’s “just gym.”

Morgan Allen with the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators pointed out P.E. is the only subject with minute requirements. The success of physical education is largely based on the amount of moderate to rigorous activity.

He said the way the 2007 law was originally written mandated minutes on a weekly basis and wouldn’t have taken into account holidays, closures, weather or other

obstructions, ultimately setting schools up for failure.

The extended time will not only allow schools to increase minutes, Allen said, but will also allow the Department of Education time to fix a lot of the technical adjustments in the legislation.

“If you only take half of your medication, do you think you’ll get the same benefit?” Cleveland asked. “No.”

## Barriers to success

The glaring question is why schools didn’t reach compliance in ten years. Educators say they were fighting against much more than a change in curriculum.

Shortly after the initial bill passed, the 2008 recession hit the American economy and dramatically changed schools’ abilities to retain staff — let alone hire new educators, Allen said. It also stripped districts of the money needed to improve facilities to accommodate more time in P.E.

But even as the economy began to improve years later, educators were then faced with a nationwide teacher shortage. People were so fearful after the recession it seemed too great a financial risk to embark upon a career in teaching, a profession notorious for being underpaid.

Allen said some school districts still haven’t recovered entirely after the recession and haven’t been able to hire back as many people as they had before 2008.

Additionally, reductions in budgets became status quo, Allen said, as districts had to make budget and staff cuts year after year based on state funding. Both the original and amended bills declare there is no revenue needed, meaning state funding to implement the changes is non-existent.

There was also little to no support from the state level from Allen’s viewpoint. “No one sat down and made a plan or coordinated at the state level,” he said. “It’s human na-

ture to delay. (People) thought, ‘Oh, that’s so far out; it’ll be easy.’”

Allen said some districts may have been able to meet the requirements by the time of compliance, but it likely wouldn’t have been the desired quality or have the desired impact when rushed. “The vast majority would have been very stretched to meet it by fall,” he said.

The Salem-Keizer School District has reached 120 minutes per elementary student per week, 30 minutes shy of the new level.

If the latest bill didn’t pass, Heidi Litchfield, director of elementary education for the district, said they would have made it work, but it wouldn’t have been easy.

“The larger elementary schools, actually most, don’t have multiple gyms or cafeterias that could be used,” Litchfield said. If needed, she said they could have had more teacher teams where two teachers take two classes into the space at the same time.

## Seeking teachers, space

Top priority schools for renovations, like Auburn Elementary in Salem, have double classes most of the time, giving the students less space to run around and posing larger issues and safety concerns for the teachers.

Herbert described a double class. The gymnasium is filled with up-

wards of 70 students and only two or three teachers to corral them as they run, yell and play with equipment.

This makes it difficult to focus on quality assessment and instruction, Herbert said. Teachers said they can’t focus well on the needs of each student, including students with disabilities.

A bond proposal is in the works for Salem-Keizer that could bring hundreds of millions of dollars to improve facility needs in the district, including gymnasiums and cafeterias. But not all districts will have that option to address facility needs, and Salem-Keizer can’t make plans around a bond that has yet to be approved by voters.

Litchfield said the easiest way to increase the number of physical education minutes is to increase the number of P.E. teachers. But, again, that’s impossible when the district isn’t making any new hires for new positions.

Moving forward, districts are looking at the resources they have available to them. This could mean doubled-up classes or thinking creatively about what space can be used or who is teaching.

Contact Natalie Pate at [npate@statesmanjournal.com](mailto:npate@statesmanjournal.com), 503-399-6745, or follow her on Twitter @NataliePate or on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/nataliepatejournalist](http://www.Facebook.com/nataliepatejournalist).

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P.O. Box 13009  
Salem, OR 97309

**Phone**  
503-873-8385

**Fax**  
503-399-6706

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[sanews@salem.gannett.com](mailto:sanews@salem.gannett.com)

**Web site**  
[www.SilvertonAppeal.com](http://www.SilvertonAppeal.com)

**Staff President**  
Ryan Kedzierski  
503-399-6648  
[rkedzierski@gannett.com](mailto:rkedzierski@gannett.com)

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