

RULE

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Dixon said his district will not be in a situation in which it will have to hire substitutes who do not have bachelor's degrees. "We have a good pool of substitutes," Dixon said. Imbler School District Superintendent Doug Hislop is philosophical when discussing the TSPC's move. Hislop said that overall he believes people who have bachelor's degrees are better qualified to be substitute teachers, especially if their training is in education. Hislop noted, though, that there are individuals who have never been to college who have what it takes to be good substitute teachers because of an innate ability to connect and communicate with children and teenagers. "There are some people who you can tell right away that they would make good substitute teachers," he said. "They probably could come in and do a great job."

Using caution

Hislop said that in many cases these individuals understand young people well because they are parents. On the other side of the spectrum are people who are excellent at working with children and teenagers primarily because of what they learned in college, Hislop said. The Imbler superintendent said he would be cautious about bringing in substitute teachers with limited college backgrounds because of the challenging nature of providing classroom instruction. "Sometimes teaching can be like trying to change the tire of a car traveling 60 miles per hour," he said. La Grande School District Superintendent George Mendoza said the TSPC's emergency rule will not impact his school district because it is not facing a substitute teacher shortage. He credits this in part to his school district's proximity to Eastern Oregon University and the strong ties it has to it. Mendoza said those it can draw upon to serve as substitutes teachers include students in EOU's master of education program. These are students with bachelor's degrees who are pursuing a master's degree in education so they can teach. The La Grande School Dis-

trict has not yet had to draw upon these students to serve as substitute teachers, but Mendoza said it is nice to know they are available if needed. Mendoza also noted that his district has 15 staff members who are not teachers but have bachelor's degrees and have expressed interest in serving as substitute educators. He said it would be easy to provide them with the assistance needed to become certified to teach as substitutes. Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of the InterMountain Education Service District, is a big supporter of the TSPC's decision. "It is a really, really positive thing for Oregon. It will allow flexibility during the pandemic," he said.

'This isn't new'

The TSPC's move will ease the labor shortage school districts are facing, a reality that has become more stressful because of educators stepping down for COVID-19 pandemic-related reasons. Mulvihill added that after the pandemic is over he believes the state should look at permanently easing some of its standards substitute teachers have to meet. "We need to determine if current standards are applicable today," he said. Mulvihill said that the requirement in place before the TSPC's emergency measure, that all substitutes have a bachelor's degree, even if it isn't an education degree, is not always a sensible one. "How having a degree in accounting helps you as a substitute teacher, I'm not sure," he said. Mulvihill noted that in other states the standards for substitute teachers have been lower than Oregon's for years.

"This isn't new," he said. Mulvihill said one of the best things about the TSPC's change is that it makes it easier for districts to rate substitutes on more than their educational background. "It gives school districts the needed flexibility for evaluating substitute teachers on performance," he said. Mulvihill stressed that lowering standards for substitute teachers should not be confused with lowering standards for full-time teachers. "Teaching is an art. I don't want to take away from what it takes to be a full-time teacher," he said.

SERVICE

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The organization donates roughly 40 to 50 cords of wood per winter to families that depend on fires to heat their homes. A cord of wood can cost upward of \$150 to \$200. "Having the kids out, we can get a lot of stuff done," said Nod Palmer, a volunteer with Neighbors Together of Union County. "The benefit is the people that need the wood during the winter. To get eight strong people to show up and be willing to work hard is sort of a rarity." Some students who chose to participate in the wood chopping were initially unaware of the service that the nonprofit provides and found appreciation in the group's efforts. "I think it's good for everyone and I think it's a good step for all the seniors to mature and be in some kind of workforce. I think it benefits the community and students," La Grande senior Lamar Langidrick said. "I think that it's good we're helping. It's going to be a cold winter."

The group at Pioneer Park worked on the Trice Community Field renovations by filling in dirt over the new drainage system in the outfield. Artificial turf was recently installed at the two fields at Pioneer Park, with some small jobs still remaining before the major city project is completed. "It really gives them a sense of pride in the community and some of the facilities we have," Baxter said. Baxter noted that Grande Ronde Hospital was very appreciative of the students' efforts, seeing as the employee force is currently strained due to COVID-19. The group did landscaping projects around the hospital and



La Grande High School seniors work together on the new turf field at Pioneer Park on Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021. Members of the senior class spent the day doing service projects across town.



Don Janes, left, assists La Grande High School senior Lamar Langidrick as they split firewood at Neighbors Together of Union County's woodlot in La Grande on Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021. The class of 2022 seniors spent the day volunteering their time to help with projects across town, including Grande Ronde Hospital, Pioneer Park and Mount Emily Recreation Area.

cleaned up its exterior.

In addition to giving back to the local community, Baxter said the cama-

raderie among students volunteering together was an added positive of the event. Despite the weather

conditions, the La Grande High School Class of 2022 came together to serve the local community.

JOHNSON

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nonetheless. "He considered himself very wealthy," he said. "He was rich because of what we had in family." The night before the accident, the majority of the Johnson family gathered by chance at the Union High School foot-

ball game to watch Dale Johnson's grandson compete on the field. The game was originally set for Oct. 2, but was moved back. Daniel Johnson considered that move fate, as it provided a perfect last memory of his father. "Our family will be able to remember him as we've always remembered him," he said. Daniel Johnson

expressed that his father's approach to life and the pride he took in being a good father will live on well past his lifetime. "He is my role model in how I try to be a father myself," he said. "He's the dad I always wanted to be." Dale Johnson had a very close relationship with his three kids and four grandchildren, a quality that his family always appreciated.

He leaves behind a wife of 38 years, Robin Johnson, whom he met when they were both just 16 years old. "I can't think of a bad memory of him, I honestly can't," Daniel Johnson said. A funeral service is planned for Saturday, Oct. 16, at 1 p.m. at Gilbert Hall on the campus of Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.

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Use of Graphics - "Looking back: Coronavirus in 2020"

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Feature Story - "New neighborhood watch helping people cope with crisis" by Dick Mason
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