

Getting It Straight

A Chinese immersion school can be equitable

In his Viewpoint "An Issue of Equity – Chinese immersion must be done carefully" (6/25), Edwin Way made a number of serious misstatements. A response is called for, since comments like his can create the perception – a misperception, in fact – that a Chinese immersion school would be inequitable and bad for this community.



The readers of *Eugene Weekly* should know that equity was a major priority for the proponents of a Chinese immersion school, both within 4J administration and in the larger community. Had the school board approved such a school, it would have been located in the Churchill region – the only one of the four regions lacking an immersion school and one that loses a number of students to the south region. It would have brought language immersion to the kids in this region who currently do not have this opportunity.

Furthermore, the proponents of a Chinese immersion school did not want to follow the previous immersion model in which students enter a lottery to compete for the spaces available. We wanted a school that was a "hybrid" – one in which everyone in the catchment area would be eligible for enrollment, but if there were spaces left over, those few spaces would be open to enrollment by lottery, just like any other public neighborhood school.

A hybrid Chinese immersion school in the Churchill area would finally bring language immersion to the students of, and help draw them back to this region. It would help to address issues of inequity.

Way also claims, incorrectly, that "most if not all of the teachers at an immersion school will be citizens of the People's Republic of China or Taiwan."

First of all, to gain legal employment in the U.S., one needs to satisfy the proof of identity and employment authorization requirements outlined in a Homeland Security document. Only in rare occasions can one obtain authorization for employment in the U.S. while holding a temporary visa.

Second, let us keep in mind that the U.S. is, at its core, a country of immigrants. Many of our friends, neighbors, employees and, yes, teachers have been citizens of another country at one point. Contrary to Way's false claims, most if not all of the bilingual teachers in our public schools are (and will continue to be) legal permanent residents or U.S. citizens who are native speakers of the languages they know.

Finally, a good Chinese bilingual teacher does not have to be a native speaker. S/he could be someone like Way, a non-native speaker with no heritage background but one who possesses superior language skills.

Way and I can agree on one thing: The day that hundreds of Eugene school children – rich, poor, brown and white – are bilingual Mandarin and English speakers will be a day that both of us will celebrate.

Helen Liu is a naturalized U.S. citizen originally from Taiwan. She has lived in Oregon since 1977.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FAIR FAIRNESS

Eve Cienfuegos (letters, 7/16) uses a broad brush to paint the Oregon Country Fair after-hours as something from the gates of hell. Any time people gather, you get a microcosm of society in general. That includes bad behavior by a few but certainly doesn't represent the many.

I've volunteered at OCF for more than 20 years and believe in the vision of bringing art, crafts, entertainment and alternative ideas to this one special place every July. Money spent stays in our communities; the philanthropy of the OCF supports education, art and environmental causes year-round.

Camping at OCF can be claustrophobic. But these "instant neighborhoods" work when everyone works together. My grandchildren attend, are supervised and have a great time each year.

The OCF philosophy on garbage: "pack it in — pack it out." Recyclables get recycled; compost from paper and food waste nourishes the gardens that feed volunteers. It's a full circle thing. Yes, you'll find those who just don't get it.

Lots of folks don't need drugs or alcohol to have a good time. These are personal choices. Let's not tear down the amazing coalescence of talent and hard work based on one person's perceptions. An incredible amount of energy and love go into making the OCF an enjoyable experience for volunteers and fairgoers.

No matter what Cienfuegos' perceptions are of OCF, the offer of camping wristbands was certainly generous. Most of us earn ours with hard work and dedication.

Ruth Pomplin
OCF Ambience Coordinator

MANAGING DISSENT

The letters section of the *Weekly* has been filled lately with a series of bitter, venomous attacks against Eugene's much-maligned "protesters" — see "Be Polite, Protesters" 7/2, "Environmental Crime Hypocrisy" 7/16 and "Of Protesters and Police" 7/16. The authors shriek incessantly about the protests being "irresponsible," "unsafe" or "violent." But in my experience the only people who are endangered by protests are the demonstrators themselves. One wonders if they would react

with equal outrage to the abuses of the police or secret services.

These questions about safety are raised not out of any legitimate concerns people may have but rather to try to shift the arena of debate away from the issues the protesters are trying to raise (the environment, poverty, etc.) towards the conduct of the protesters. Moreover the authors seem to be completely out of touch with the values of this community, damning rather than celebrating dissident culture.

Violence has occurred and may occur in the future, but even the most devout pacifist must have trouble condemning people who are acting to defend that entity which gives us life: the Earth. It's a little bit funny that so many self-proclaimed patriots conveniently forget, in their haste to denounce popular ferment, that this country was founded on the use of political violence. The time for idle chatter is over. We are nearing what scientists call the "tipping point," that time when global warming cannot be stopped, and the fate of our entire species and all life on Earth rests in our hands.

Johannes Pedersen
Eugene

GIVING GRATITUDE

My name is Mark Zolun, and I was co-owner of the restaurant Iraila in Eugene. Last October I was diagnosed with bladder cancer — a scary thing to face for any small business owner with no insurance.

Through several benefits (thank you, Cosmic Pizza and Koho Bistro and everyone who helped organize!), Eugeneans rallied and were incredibly generous — but it doesn't end there. My sister lives in Rockwall, Texas. Donna and Steve Boback are her best friends. They wanted to help an organization or person instead of buying gifts for each other at Christmas. When they learned of my situation, they felt it was a no brainer as to whom they would help. Then Misty Rapp, who owns a small business in Rockwall, decided to honor a relative's cancer survival and held a fundraiser. The combinations of these generous gifts allowed me to visit my sister and brother, the best healing gift once I finished my radiation.

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 Antique Powerland Museum - Brooks, Oregon

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 Admission - \$8.00, Kids under 12 Free.
 Free Parking • Lots of Dry Camping - \$12
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