

NEWS

BILL WOULD BAN SECLUSION ROOMS

Twelve-year-old Jared Harrison testified about his experiences being shut in a seclusion room at his 4J school before the Legislature's House Committee on Education in Salem on Feb. 22. "I think people have it in their minds that kids that are exposed to this kind of treatment are some kind of monsters," Jared's mother, Jennifer Harrison, says. "They are not thinking about a kid who can speak at length publicly."

Rep. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, is pushing for House Bill 2756, which would force school districts to get rid of free-standing, self-contained units — seclusion cells — but would not change Oregon laws that regulate non free-standing seclusion rooms. Also on the slate is HB 2585, which would require the Oregon Department of Education to establish minimum standards for spaces used for seclusion.

Jared, who has attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and was placed in the behavioral program at McCornack Elementary, was repeatedly put in a seclusion room and had restraint used upon him from first through fourth grades, Harrison says.

She says while she welcomes this bill, she doesn't think it goes far enough. "It should have to do with the locking; if you are locking a child in a room, it should be considered seclusion." Jared testified to the committee that the door to the room he was in would be locked magnetically while someone held down a button, and he spoke about an incident in which another student "picked on him" by turning off the lights, leaving him screaming in the dark until someone noticed.

Harrison says, according to the most recent data she was able to get from 4J, there were 235 uses of seclusion in 4J elementary schools in 2010-11. She says, "Either there were more than 235 instances of imminent threat or bodily injury in grade schools at 4J or they are misusing seclusion rooms." She says that either idea is scary. Under Oregon law, the rooms can only be used in cases of "reasonable threat of imminent, serious bodily injury."

The Oregonian writes, "Portland Public Schools reported using seclusion rooms 104 times from the beginning of the school year to mid-January." But Harrison says in Eugene she has not been able to get the most recent statistics from 4J.

Harrison says if other parents want to contact her because they share concerns over the seclusion room issue, she can be reached by phone at 914-5095 and email at jraeharrison@hotmail.com — *Camilla Mortensen*

4J BOARD PURSUES BOND MEASURE, 3X5

The 4J School Board last week voted to place a bond measure on the May 21 ballot and addressed teachers' concerns over schedules at middle and high schools.

The \$170 million bond would replace or renovate four schools (Roosevelt and Jefferson/Arts and Technology Academy middle schools, and Howard and River Road elementary schools); improve technology and security, repair schools, and update instructional materials; and cover additions or remodels at Gilham Elementary School and Kelly Middle School's track and field. Property tax rates would rise about \$42 for the median homeowner, the district estimates.

At the Feb. 20 meeting, Superintendent Sheldon Berman announced that he was postponing for a year implementing the common schedule at two middle schools — Roosevelt and Kelly.

"I asked the superintendent to grant RMS [Roosevelt Middle School] more time to process the change so that we could review many of the assumptions in our current schedule," said RMS Principal Chris Mitchell. Administrators at Kelly did not respond to a request for comment.

Much of the public comment period at the meeting focused on the district's plan to switch all high schools to a 3x5 (three trimesters of five classes daily) schedule. A group of South Eugene High School teachers had written the board expressing their concerns.

Several teachers said the 3x5 schedule would weaken relationships with students. South teacher Scott Zarnegar said he spoke "mainly because I want to see my kids all year." He added that it was a "waste of time" starting with a new group of students three times a year.

South teacher Lynette Williams suggested waiting to see how the schedule change affected students at Churchill — which implemented the 3x5 this year — and at other Oregon schools. She noted that Thurston High School and schools in Dexter and Portland have discontinued 3x5 schedules.

Eugene Education Association (EEA) President Tad Shannon says that "there remain far too many questions," including the schedule's impact on academics and the cost savings. "Teachers, students and parents were not adequately involved in the decision," he said.

All four high school principals spoke in favor of the new schedule. South's Randy Bernstein said there will be more time for collaboration and more opportunities for mobile students, and noted that South will gain 20 percent more class sections under 3x5. Churchill's Kim Finch said the schedule provided more acceleration opportunities.

Board Chair Jennifer Geller said that "the opinions of teachers matter a lot," but urged moving ahead with the common schedule. Even though questions remain, she

said, schools can learn from each other. Other board members present also spoke in favor of moving forward.

Berman said he appreciated hearing the teachers' comments. "I know there is no perfect schedule. There never will be," he said. "Every schedule is a set of choices." But he said the schedule selection process was democratic. At the same time, 4J should learn from

Churchill's experience and address the concerns raised by South's teachers to smooth the transition.

South's teachers are considering other courses of action, including enlisting parents' support, as a next step. The EEA will ask teachers to sign a district-wide statement of concern seeking a one-year postponement of the schedule change. — *Anne Bridgman*

NO SITE REVIEW FOR PARVIN BUTTE

Thanks to what a local land use attorney calls "poorly written" land use code in Lane County, there's no end in sight for the gravel mining of Parvin Butte. The 600-foot butte continues to be quarried by Lost Creek Rock Products (LCRP); the Dexter and Lost Creek neighbors who protest the mining have lost some ground in a recent Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) decision. LUBA decided Feb. 6 that LCRP does not need to undergo a site review in its mining operation at Parvin Butte.

For the neighbors, this means that the county will not regulate any of the disturbances caused by the mining, such as noise, dust and increased traffic. With no site review, the neighbors will not have the opportunity to participate in public input, which would allow them to comment on the regulation of the mining activities. Neighbors have complained of explosions that scare humans, pets and livestock and of speeding trucks on their rural roads.

ALLEN HANCOCK

Growing up in small-town Portola Valley, Calif., Allen Hancock had time to spend with nature. "My fourth-grade teacher took us to a meadow and pond near the school," he recalls. "A couple years later, I watched as bulldozers arrived. It broke my heart." Always an avid cyclist, he biked eight miles to high school in Redwood City. "My first political work was a social studies project," he says, "a campaign to stop the transfer of water north to south in California." He went to Northland College in Wisconsin for a degree in environmental studies, then came to Eugene in 1987 for grad school at the UO. "I wanted to apply what I learned to ancient forest protection," he says. "I was an administrative monkey-wrencher. I filed hundreds of appeals against timber sales on public lands." Over the years, Hancock has led bike tours throughout the U.S. and Canada, and around the world. A member of the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, he is active in current efforts to make South Willamette Street accessible to cyclists. In 1990, he was one of eight investors to purchase a large house on Alder Street, originally a home for wayward girls, that they restored and named Du-má Community, an experiment in sustainable shared living. "There are 10 of us now, from 9 years old to 50s," he says. "We share food at dinner six nights a week."



HAPPENING PEOPLE
BY PAUL NEEVEL