

## THE COUNCIL'S INTENT

It has not been a longstanding intention of the City Council to close Whoville before April 15 or even by April 15. The following statements were made on Feb. 18:

"Our intent is not to just to go in and shut down the site, our intent is to provide time for people to transition to whatever site that Council chooses, and so that is what our intent is as we go forward." — Jon Ruiz, city manager.

"I am very glad to hear the city manager state very clearly the intention to find a new location and to invite folks at Whoville to relocate there. I think that speaks to the intent of the motion that I proposed and that this council passed." — Claire Syrett, city councilor.

"Yes, I concur that our intention was to have a place to go before Whoville shuts down ... with regard to other sites and collaborations." — Alan Zelenka, city councilor.

The motion to have Whoville closed down by April 15 was made on March

10 by Greg Evans. I am giving Evans the benefit of the doubt about why he made that motion and hoping he made it to inspire urgency on the part of the council to find an alternate site. Unfortunately, it inspired our military-minded city manager to create an unnecessary and obscenely expensive show of force at Whoville — another uneven battle in the war against the poor.

Vickie Nelson  
Eugene

## HOUSING FIRST

Dear Congressman Peter DeFazio: Please read this article on a homeless solution in the *Metro News* of Vancouver, B.C.: [wkly.ws/1q4](http://wkly.ws/1q4).

Everyone should see this and hope everyone can be housed. It saves money to house people. With a secure place to live they become better citizens!

Who ever decided that millions of Americans should be without income and homeless? Eugene needs emergency help with the thousands who are homeless.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) has statistics on zero incomes, incomes less than \$350 a month, and it even attempts to number the homeless. These numbers are much larger than are reported elsewhere.

Lane County, which is Oregon's Department of Human Services//SNAP District 5, should report to you each month its hidden statistics. Tens of thousands of your constituents in Lane County are in great trouble. All shelter programs have huge waiting lists. Lots of our citizens are outside, hiding from local police.

Jerry Smith, MSW  
Eugene

## RIVER LESSONS

Thanks to professor Jim Earl for his eloquent prose in praise of a walk in the park. And thanks to *EW's* editor for knowing great writing when he sees it and sharing it with the rest of us students of nature.

I particularly enjoyed studying Earl's

four conclusions and wholeheartedly agree with three of them: Nature is perfect; it couldn't care less about us; we love it anyway. In any world, these three things characterize a fine romance. But his first conclusion, that "Unlike the human world, Nature has no thoughts, intentions or desires; it just is," gave me pause and made me think.

Certainly it is true that Nature, like Frank Baum's Scarecrow character, doesn't have a brain (ergo no thoughts — at least not without magic). But it seems to me that intentions and desires are evolutionary traits shared by us all. Look again at those old cottonwoods that have weathered the storms all these years. Couldn't their bark manifest an intention to survive, their leaves a desire to continue?

I agree with Earl that Nature is what it is. But I also agree with Bill Clinton, who argued that "It depends on what the definition of 'is' is." Humans and Nature — what's the diff? We're all made of the same stuff. That is what it is to me. If we could

# RECLAIMING PUBLIC EDUCATION BY CALEB MCKENZIE

## Can We Trust Common Core?

CORPORATIONS, NOT EDUCATORS, ARE BEHIND THE STANDARDS

Parents want to trust the schools where they send their children. Teachers, like myself, want to trust the learning criteria set before us by the state. And I believe most of us want to trust our government to make the best decisions possible for the children of our nation. The problem in trusting the newly implemented Common Core Standards and Assessments is that there are too many unanswered questions for it to feel safe on any of these levels. By themselves, standards are great and teachers strive to reach them. Unfortunately, many problems are introduced when working with the standards and assessments contained in the Common Core. Here are three questions that come to mind about Common Core in our schools.

- The first is: who created it? As far as I can tell, it was designed behind closed doors by a group of 27 people, made up almost entirely of non-educators. The difficulty in trusting this is: If Common Core is going to affect the testing and learning climate of our entire nation, why weren't more educators involved in its creation? Most of us wouldn't ask a lawyer to design our house, or a politician to perform our surgeries. Why, then, weren't more professional educators part of an open creation process? And, more importantly, why is this system now being mandated as the driving force of student education?

- Next question. What are the Common Core Assessments designed to do? Everyone knows assessment is essential in schools. When students understand key concepts, teachers move on. If students have difficulties, teachers slow down to focus on specific areas. As teachers, we use a variety of assessments to help shape every lesson. When looking at how Common Core assesses student achievement, the complex tests don't seem to be a valid measuring stick for the job. New York started Common Core earlier than other states and found that not only did their passing rates drop by 30 percent, but



less than a third of students could even pass. So, at the end of the school year, what will these failure rates prove? We know the scores are aimed to evaluate teacher and school performance. Will this test data be considered solid proof of inept teachers and feeble public schools? Will it create initiatives to shut down schools in poor neighborhoods? And, how are students going to feel about their ability when it's so difficult to succeed? Will failure and mandatory remedial classes motivate students to try harder on a test that, to many of them, seems impossible?

- The third question, though definitely not the final one, is: Why is Common Core linked to so many multi-billion dollar corporations? After some digging, I found it's being pushed forward by both the Gates and Walmart Foundations, Boeing, Ford and Nationwide, just to name a few. It's pleasant to imagine Common Core being funded out of the goodness of the corporate heart, but common sense tells us that that's probably not the case. So why the aggressive corporate boost? What do they stand to gain? Could shoddy test scores lead to public school shutdowns, paving the way for the privatization of America's schools? Will we soon send our children off to Walmart High, or Nationwide Insurance Elementary? And why are many of these corporations affiliated with agencies like Broad, who spend millions to destroy school boards and teachers' unions? One thing is certain: There are billions of dollars in America's public

school system that, for the time being, are out of reach from these corporate giants. Unfortunately, I have few answers to these questions, and the more I learn about Common Core, the more questions I have. Every system has room for improvement, including public education. As a teacher of 10 years though, I can say there are too many ifs in the Common Core to trust it achieving anything but more problems.

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