

What Happened?

DEFEATED 4J SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES REFLECT ON MAY ELECTION

Last May's Eugene 4J school board elections were the most contested in recent memory. Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE) appreciated the deeper level of debate and analysis that took place. Mary Leighton, Jerry Rosiek and Maya Rabasa met last week to discuss their thoughts as runners up, running as outsiders.

What equity-related issues do you believe the 4J board should prioritize?

Leighton: The board needs to improve its ability to see structural inequities and fix them. For example, special programs should be geographically accessible to a broad spectrum of students. The board needs to find ways to reduce the extent to which "choice" is paid for out of "equity" accounts, as it is now to a great extent.

Rosiek: Eugene is an economically segregated school district. It is becoming more so as class sizes rise and parents become more anxious about their children's quality of education. This motivates high-income parents to move to school zones they believe will benefit their children. Social and material resources become concentrated in some schools, hurting not just our children, but our community.

Rabasa: There is no other way to build long-term solutions to equity-related issues than to prioritize lowering class sizes. With 30-plus first graders in a class, teachers can deliver eight minutes of individualized attention; in middle and high schools, the chance is only for one to two minutes per period of individualized attention. The board must mobilize the public to demand better funding.

Do you foresee changes to the board's support for the testing and data-based approach to education?

Leighton: I want the board to pay attention to data about outcomes we care about. I want the board to back off the time and resource-intensive high-stakes tests and add measures that tell us about how well we are doing in other areas, such as students' finding a productive place in community life.

Rosiek: There are different kinds of change: superficial and real. Real change would be lifting the gag order forbidding 4J teachers from talking to parents honestly about the effects of standardized tests. It would involve notifying parents

multiple times of their right to opt out, including the kindergarten tests. I see little indication the board is willing to make these more substantive moves.

Rabasa: Siding with political lobbyists on education policy is contrary to 4J's vows to prioritize inclusivity and equity. It is a questionable expenditure of our resources. The board should follow the leadership of Springfield School Board's 2016 resolution urging all parents to opt their children out. I am hopeful that 4J will take similar bold steps.

Leighton's Question: What was the coolest thing you learned?

I was inspired by the college-age activists working on all the campaigns. They were knowledgeable about the process, curious about the issues and thoughtful about whose campaign they supported.

Rosiek's Question: What should voters be paying attention to in the coming years?

The influence of Stand for Children on local education politics is a problem. Our board elections are supposed to be non-partisan. SFC, however, functions like a political party. It endorses and funds candidates and provides infrastructure and paid political consultants. The 4J board — all of them, I believe — are SFC endorsed candidates. SFC is helpful in many ways. But it is not healthy for a single organization to have such exclusive influence over our school policy discussions.

Rabasa's Question: Is there anything you learned in this process that you think voters should consider when electing future board members?

Our community deeply values our schools. I learned that we become invigorated when given the opportunity to talk about our experiences as a community. I hope voters continue to seek out information on the positions candidates hold and share their thoughts with their friends, family, neighbors [and] co-workers. Our elections are most dynamic and yield the best results following periods of fruitful conversation.

See a video of the candidates' extended responses at oregoncape.org. CAPE, the Community Alliance for Public Education, is a coalition of parents, teachers, professors, students and community members who challenge the many assaults on public education and who believe that a strong public education is the foundation for American democracy. We meet first, third and fourth Wednesdays at Perugino coffee downtown.

percentage points lower than in states with the weakest gun laws. The prevalence of bad-apple gun dealers, combined with neighboring states with weak gun laws, like Indiana and Wisconsin, make Chicago streets significantly more dangerous.

Curious how Oregon stacks up? Oregon is a victim of weak gun laws in other states. Crime guns flow from these states into our cities, towns and neighborhoods to be used in crime. Of the 2,519 crime guns recovered in Oregon in 2016, nearly 30 percent were imported from other states.

Let's shut down or reform these dealers, making it harder for dangerous people to access guns and lowering the crime rate city-by-city and state-by-state.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

RECYCLING SICKNESS

I work at a local supermarket. There is a stigma about paper bags. Often the customers express embarrassment or even shame for forgetting them.

As a courtesy clerk with 20 years of food service experience, remaining mindful and trained in food safety, I have been blown out of the water at the state of a lot of these reusable bags.

They are dirty, stained, filled with trash, reek of cigarette smoke, chemicals and, at times, are putrifying. I look in every bag.

The most unsettling contaminants are mouse or rat droppings, and dead insects.

Foodborne illness is the leading cause of illness in the United States, and cross contamination is a dangerous contributor. Nyquil has been flying off the shelves. So many customers are sick and their grocery bags are also infected.

I think Eugene ought to rethink charging customers for paper.

Dan Egnew
Eugene

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