

KEIZERTIMES PUBLIC SQUARE

PUBLIC SQUARE welcomes all points of view. Published submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Keizertimes

The rush to electric

To the Editor:

Are we rushing to a mostly all electric automotive fleet too fast? Possibly as there are unknowns that need to be resolved sooner rather than later. For example:

- Where will the electricity to charge electric fleets come from and what will be the cost of this electricity to vehicle owners and the impact to general rate payers?

- The quantity of batteries required for the electric fleets is going to be enormous and currently there is not a battery recycle industry operating at the scale that is going to be required to handle all of the batteries that wear out. Further, many of the materials used to make the batteries are hazardous and will require special (and expensive) disposal and reclamation strategies.

- If additional wind, solar, hydro and geothermal sources are not brought on line, we may find that the required electrical power will be produced via fossil fuels which sort of negates the promise of the program in the first place. Or we may see a rush to develop more nuclear fueled power plants and this option should be of grave concern.

Bringing electric vehicles to the forefront is a good idea and it will contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and will greatly improve urban area air pollution. But maybe we should proceed in small steps which will allow the power supply and battery recycle-disposal issues to be resolved first. Otherwise we could end up, as history has shown time after time, with an environmental and safety mess on our hands. For once let's get more of the processes up and running ahead of time. In other words, let's actually be ready.

Jim Parr
Keizer

Bethell needs to clarify views

To the Editor:

We are regular readers of the *Keizertimes*. We believe in supporting the local newspaper, aware of its important to us in terms of what's going on in our own community. Most recently, a story by Joey Cappelletti on Keizer's school board director most directly caught our attention.

The article quoted several views of Salem-Keizer School Board director Danielle Bethell. We were left confused from what she was quoted as saying, only able to guess at what she wants to have taught in our schools here. For example, is she coming from a personal position of general disappointment with our schools and ways to improve them or is she a devout follower of former President Donald Trump and his ideas for lessons to be taught in our schools?

We know that Trump has little regard for persons who've come to the U.S. from Mexico. Trump has referred to them

Letters

mostly as "people with a lot of problems, bringing drugs and bringing crime while they are also rapists." Trump made it clear that only persons coming here from Norway are acceptable while the only true Americans are the whites or Caucasians.

Trump also worked diligently to keep children brought here by their parents from Central America from becoming citizens. He also does not like immigrants who practice any religion other than Christianity. Further, he's opposed to immigrants who seek refuge in America, coming here, as they often do, to escape the brutality and general oppression of those nations where dictators rule with an iron hand and freedoms do not exist.

Then there are all members of the LGBTQ+ community who are on Trump's list of undesirables and by whom Trump has denied participation in the American military and other occupational pursuits. American journalists are unacceptable, unless they serve by praising Trump, providing him only positive recognition. Perhaps most egregious is his disdain for facts in presenting U.S. history lessons: Trump being against open and honest recognition to treatment directed at indigenous peoples, African-Americans and others.

We'd very much appreciate a clearer and more specific set of statements regarding Bethell's views on public education. This effort on her part would either reassure that she has legitimate concerns and can define them, or confirm a waywardness, an out of step with what's perceived to be majority views on the pressing issues of our time.

Gene H. McIntyre
Keizer

SHARE YOUR OPINION

TO SUBMIT

a **letter to the editor** (300 words),

or **guest column** (600 words),

email us by noon Tuesday:

publisher@keizertimes.com

'Tis the season to give generously to those in need. Donate money or goods to the charity of your chose this holiday season

School safety is everyone's responsibility

By SATYA CHANDRAGIRI, MD

"How many more children do we sacrifice before we can be honest, transparent and do the right thing for our students' and staff safety?"

I raised this question in a Salem-Keizer School board meeting. It is unethical to fall into the spiral of silence and pretend everything is okay. The pandemic, school closure, disrupted attachment, social unrest and division in our community is perhaps fueling some of the emotional and behavioral turmoil.

When incidents of school violence, suicide and bullying occur, it harms everyone and has disparate impact on those from vulnerable communities. Let's include all to uphold safety—students, parents, staff, educators, mental health professionals, policy makers and child serving agencies including law enforcement. It is important to intervene before lives are changed or lost. School safety is essential for learning.

Our community and youth have asked us to address this.

We cannot change what we don't measure. The best practice calls for establishing good indicators, transparent data sharing, understanding the root causes and using data to inform the policy changes and accountability, not some external agendas, or biases.

Vision of safety without implementation plan is just a fantasy.

Within the challenges, I see opportunities:

Dismantle structural barriers

Parents worry about the safety of their children. They read media reports of high-risk situations yet feel excluded from participation.

The Oregon Department of Education should start publicly sharing the data on exclusionary discipline and make the public domain data easy to access, understand and use by the community. Lack of public access of this data risks timely identification of any suicide or violence contagion, save lives or support those who need additional help or early detection.

In 2018, Marion County lost 20 youths to suicide, and many were from our schools. That year the Salem-Keizer school district expelled 140 students, 1,385 students had out-of-school suspensions and 1,892 students had in-school suspensions, which was the highest among all Oregon school districts. Unfortunately, this has been the case for our district as far back as 2011 to 2016.

Those from vulnerable communities often face additional barriers as they are unaware of protections afforded under the law, policies, or ways to appeal.

Exclusionary discipline is harmful for all

Exclusionary discipline—including expulsions, out-of-school or in-school suspensions, and classroom removal disproportionately affects students from vulnerable communities. It leads to negative

guest OPINION

outcomes including poor grades, absenteeism, drop out rates, lower graduation, adult mental illness, and incarceration. A middle school student who receives an out-of-school suspension is 34% less likely to graduate high school on time, risks future suspensions even after four years. Even the bystanders are harmed and traumatized when high risk behaviors occur.

There is no profile of a student attacker. It needs both, a timely threat-risk assessment along with risk mitigation such as therapy, social work intervention and referral for additional services. Often students can incur disciplinary actions for many reasons—bullying, violence and involvement with drugs, bringing weapons to school, or criminal behaviors such as sexual violence, gang violence, fire setting. They may have multiple underlying factors including emotional difficulties, thoughts of suicide, desperate feelings or some face setbacks in personal life or community, sudden losses, relationship breakups, have multiple social adversities, are victims of abuse, violence, bullying. Some have special needs and may be reacting to changes or sensory overload that perhaps triggers some of their behaviors. When children are hurting, some act out while others harm themselves. Trauma-informed schools and addressing underlying causes prevents high risk incidents.

Oversight matters

In April, 2021, the school district committed to undertake important operational changes to address student safety while rethinking their approaches to student discipline. They planned using restorative practices and not having regular presence of law enforcement officers in the school. The fiduciary oversight duty of the school board was to ensure it closely monitored the safety of the students, which was delegated to the district. District agreed to share historical and monthly reports in the school board meetings which best captured the school climate and safety. Thus, community could hold the board and district accountable.

With many challenges adding up as our students returned to school, the number of suspensions this year jumped from 130 through June 2021 to over 1,300 just between September and November 2021. Some schools saw big surge in suspensions culminating in high-risk incidence, reported fights between groups of students and violence contagion, students getting arrested and many missed opportunities.

It's time to be transparent, honest, accountable and realize that school safety is everyone's responsibility.

(Dr. Satya Chandragiri is a member of the Salem-Keizer School Board.)

KEIZERTimes

WHEATLAND PUBLISHING CORP.
142 Chemawa Road N, Keizer, Oregon 97303
Phone: 503.390.1051 • www.keizertimes.com



PUBLISHER
& EDITOR

Lyndon Zaitz

publisher@keizertimes.com

FOLLOW US
ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
Facebook
Instagram
Twitter

NEW DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTION PRICING:
\$5 per month, \$60 per year

YEARLY PRINT
SUBSCRIPTION PRICING:
\$35 inside Marion County
\$43 outside Marion County
\$55 outside Oregon

Periodical postage paid at Salem, Oregon

PUBLISHED
EVERY FRIDAY
Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303