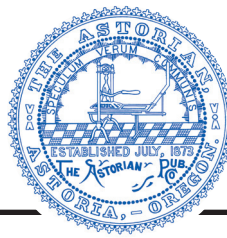


OPINION



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OUR VIEW

Farmers right to be skeptical

The results of a study of stakeholder attitudes regarding the proposed breaching of Snake River dams were hardly surprising, but agricultural interests say the document may serve to educate proponents of the complexities the issue presents.

We can only hope so.

The study was recommended by a task force on reviving the orca population in Puget Sound. Scientists blame a declining orca population on a lack of Chinook salmon for the killer whales to eat.

All Snake River salmon runs are federally threatened or endangered species. Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and the Legislature supported the \$750,000 study to catalog different perspectives on breaching the dams as a way to increase fish runs.

The preliminary study represents the views of farmers, tribes, environmentalists, fishermen, shippers and government officials.

Breaching the dams would make it impossible to ship grain down the Snake River. Loss of water impounded by the dams would impact irrigation on thousands of acres of farmland, and the loss of electricity generated by the dams would increase the cost of pumping groundwater.

Proponents of breaching the dams have suggested that subsidies to farmers could be built into the multibillion dollar price tag.

"It is important to make agricul-



The Ice Harbor dam on the Snake River near Burbank.

AP Photo

ture 'whole,' so farmers do not suffer significant economic losses if the dams are breached," the study reported.

But, according to the study, farmers don't believe they will be made whole.

Farmers are worried about being "at the mercy of railroads" that would take over shipping and skeptical about switching to crops that use less water, according to the study.

Washington Grain Commission CEO Glen Squires said he appreciated that the report's writers captured different views on breaching the dams.

"I think they genuinely listened and began to realize this whole thing is more complicated than meets the eye," he said. "It's not as easy as giving a farmer a nickel, dime, 20 cents a bushel — case solved."

Indeed, it is complicated. The

livelihoods of farmers, barge operators, deck hands, dock workers and the vendors who support them hang in the balance. The loudest proponents of breaching the dams seem to have the least personally at stake.

We don't know anyone who is against saving the whales or the salmon if the real human costs and impacts can be realistically addressed. Count us as skeptical that could ever be the case.

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GUEST COLUMN

Some New Year's ideas on education

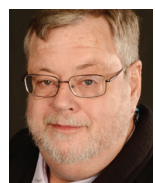
I've never been one to make New Year's resolutions or annual predictions. Instead, in the interest of stirring the political pot, I offer five possibly provocative proposals for education in Oregon.

1. Kill the idea that teachers and other educators have been underpaid.

Salaries are based not on one's worth to society but on the number of people deemed available and competent to fill the job. That's why Joe and Josephine Pro Athlete make more than you and I do — although Joe is paid zillions more than Josephine, which is unconscionable.

However, there are caveats.

As the pool of qualified job applicants dwindles, school districts must innovate. Raising salaries is one approach, especially when union and district leadership agree to put the money into entry-level salaries.

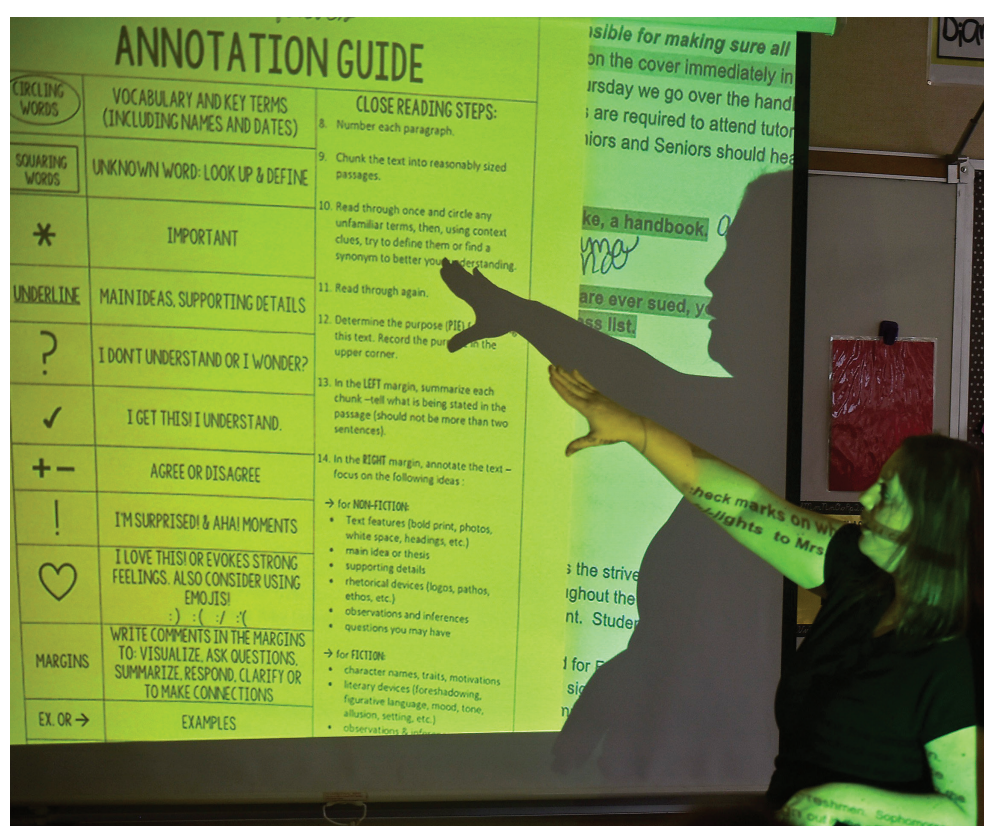


DICK HUGHES

Labor-management negotiations probably would look far different if the priorities were set by potential job applicants and new employees. For example, ditching the traditional seniority system for job placements, work schedules or other areas could make a district far more attractive to new hires. So could offering free child care to young couples.

A related issue is that working-class Oregonians, like their kin across the country, cannot afford to buy homes. Student loans are one reason. Until Congress acts — if it does — the Oregon Legislature and school districts could take matters into their own hands by offering loan repayments. Should the state launch a program to support people going into education, rural health care or other desired jobs that meet the state's goals?

2. Require a full academic year of student teaching — and pay the stu-



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Good teachers, counselors and administrators put in an incredible amount of unpaid time.

dent teachers, or at least cover their tuition cost.

Teaching is really hard work. Student teaching is time-consuming. However, future teachers need the experience of preparing for the school year, opening the year, going through the ups and downs, and closing the year.

One term of student teaching is inadequate. There is too much to learn, especially about classroom management.

Better-prepared teachers will be more effective teachers and more likely to last longer.

3. Bring back sabbaticals.

It's true that teachers and many other school employees get summers "off" and vacations during the year. But the good

teachers, counselors and administrators put in an incredible amount of unpaid time during those supposed vacations.

Burnout is real. Research suggests that if a student starts the day in a class led by a teacher suffering from burnout, that student's learning will suffer throughout the rest of the day. Districts axed sabbaticals to save money, but people should be encouraged to take extended time off to get a fresh take on life and learn new skills.

4. Allow Oregon's community colleges and small institutions to unite.

Small private colleges are in a financial bind. Meanwhile, the regional state

universities struggle to maintain their places.

Why not allow a community college to join with a regional or private university? That might bring down student costs while maintaining diversity in offerings, including varied approaches to teacher training.

I know, I know, there would be all sorts of things to work through. But are you going to be naysayer or a "Let's do it"?

5. Make classes relevant.

In my era, boring classes seemed acceptable. That won't cut it anymore. Dropping out no longer is considered appropriate.

The key is for each student to have a reason to come to school each day. That calls for profound redesign of curriculum and teaching methods to make classes interesting, perhaps transforming basic science into "crime science analysis," economics into "how to be a music mogul" and English composition into "how to create and produce a screenplay."

We've come to our senses by recognizing that career and technical education classes have tremendous value. It is common for 90% of CTE students to graduate, as Gov. Kate Brown frequently touts. What she and others don't say enough, however, is that music, theater, sports and other programs also can achieve those levels. For each student, the answer may be different — but it always involves a caring adult.

North Salem High School sought to raise its graduation rate through identifying a trusted adult to serve as an advocate for each student at risk of dropping out. For many advocates, that meant checking in daily with their student.

The school's goal was to boost the graduation rate 10 points within four years. It was accomplished in one year.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.