

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

Education Becomes Game of Chance

School closures defer 'American Dream'

BY STEVE LINDER AND LYNN SCHORE

For most Americans, earning a living wage, home ownership and a decent retirement are part of the American Dream. Equal access to public education for all is a cornerstone of that dream. Today, equal access to education is being redefined as equal access to a "Game of Chance."

The Portland Public School Board's decision to close neighborhood schools is the latest step in a strategy to move children from small neighborhood schools to larger 'community' schools where they must be bused or where there is small lottery chance at getting into a well-funded

magnet school. Access to this game is not equal. Special groups get priority access. Certain special schools pull a disproportionate amount of PPS Foundation monies, defying logic and policy.

Magnet schools seem like window dressing on a failing school system. Magnet schools have their place, but neighborhood schools must be the first priority, because they best provide the equal access supported by law.

The school board has chosen to ignore its own school closure policy. Will it follow state and federal law? Will it follow *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*?

This new separate and unequal design will worsen segregation in Portland schools. Portland's new big box and lottery education strategy will prepare only

Neighborhood schools must be the first priority, because they best provide the equal access supported by law.

the special few for the great jobs. Unfortunately, many excellent jobs will go to people educated outside Portland, because our local education system is impoverished.

Salem is draining Multnomah County and starving public education in Portland. The State Legislature is standing by while neighborhood schools are closed, neighborhood pride and identity are lost, families are pushed out of Portland, teachers are laid off, and sound education is sacrificed.

The Portland Public School Board is so beleaguered it may not even realize the

short-sightedness of consolidation and closure decisions. PPS is liquidating our city's historic legacy: the small, well-situated neighborhood schools.

An intrinsic element of value in a neighborhood is the school-within that neighborhood. The neighborhood school reflects community vitality. When a neighborhood loses its school, it not only loses identity and pride: it becomes impoverished economically compared to any neighborhood with a school.

What are better strategies? Make better financial use of the valuable Blanchard

Administration Building property. Coordinate with City Bureaus for multi-purpose use of public properties. Show the public some PPS warehouse closures! To improve customer service and save money, consolidate the PPS central office and cut administrative fat. There is something suspicious about a school district that needs a Communications Department and a Public Relations Department.

Steve Linder and Lynn Schore are Smith School parents from southwest Portland. They are members of the Neighborhood Schools Alliance.

More Prisons Are Not the Answer

Increase safety with sentencing options

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Crime rates are down, but incarceration rates increase. The number of people going in to prison outpaces the number coming out. As a result, our prison population increased by just over 48,000 in one year—that's about 900 new inmates a week.

Last year, 2.1 million people called a U.S. prison or jail home, a 2.3-percent increase from the previous year. These new numbers from the Bureau of Justice Statistics represent a record 30-plus year rise in the number of prisoners in the U.S.

Changes in sentencing law explain much of the increase. Laws

put into place in the 80s and 90s—mandatory drug sentencing and three strike laws among them—prevent judges from evaluating the conditions of the offense and the background of the offender. Strict sentences are required, regardless of whether or not they fit the specifics of the case. A side effect of this sentencing structure is an overcrowded prison system where over 50-percent of the inmates are non-violent and drug offenders.

There is growing evidence that the money spent to house lesser offenders often doesn't offset the costs of the crimes prevented. Additionally, many studies and experts say large-scale imprisonment is not the most effective means of achieving public safety. There appears to be a point at which the harmful effects of this trend out-

weigh any reductions in crime.

While incarcerating offenders may serve to reduce the amount of crime committed in certain neighborhoods, those same areas are damaged as more people are imprisoned and recycled in and out of the system. This creates a set of social challenges that affect the offender, the offender's family and the community as a whole and lasts long after a sentence has been served.

Pressuring lawmakers to reinstate judicial discretion is the first step to easing prison overcrowding. With this power restored judges can sentence a drug or non-violent offender to prison, order them to seek substance abuse or psychiatric counseling.

Polymakers must also make sure inmates and those recently released receive the necessary psychological, drug prevention and life-skills counseling. Keeping recidivism rates down is a critical

component of making sure the nation's prison population doesn't continue to increase.

It is no secret that poor and black communities tend to carry much of the burden of the escalating incarceration rates. When large numbers of individuals from a particular population are sent to prison, that community's ability to overcome financial and social obstacles is severely weakened. Furthermore, that community's views of what is 'normal' can begin to shift. Prisons, much like schools or religious institutions, begin to shape the values of that community.

With a prison population made up of nearly 60-percent Blacks and Latinos, society as a whole, African-Americans in particular, can't afford to let this trend continue.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



Letter to the Editor

Neighborhoods in Danger

Neighbors are one of my joys and children are one the strongest glues to hold us together.

If you ever become alert for a child in possible danger you always get a smile from the parent. If you ever volunteer to help a child in homework you can get invited for dinner.

Listening to the children is a must for a strong neighborhood. When children complain about what is happening at school it is time to spring to alarm. This means the neighborhood is in danger.

School policy can be as threatening as an earthquake. If children feel disrupted by changes in school it is time to act. If some children feel they are being left behind, it is time to get together and act. The neighborhood is in danger.

Everyone in the neighborhood

should be concerned about the children, not just parents.

A child who sees a constructive future is not easily derailed into destructive behavior. A child who sees your concern for their safety and openness to their creativity is not going to see your place as a spot to vent frustration. For the child's good and our own well being, all of us should be supporting the children.

What a joy of the spirit is a neighborhood with happy children. This means their main job of learning is going well. They are safe. They the adults are listening to them. They can even feel it if you cast your votes thinking of them. These are the roots of a strong neighborhood.

Jim Anderson
Northeast Portland



THE SPINAL COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 7. CHILDREN & CHIROPRACTIC: Start off early in life for a lifetime of health

Q: When will my children be old enough to benefit from seeing a Chiropractor?

A: Children of Chiropractors often receive their first spinal adjustments the day they are born. Using special techniques for infants, Chiropractors are able to correct spinal misalignments caused by the traumatic and turning of childbirth. What's more, we're frequently able to alleviate infant problems like colic that often keeps both babies and parents up all night.

Q: I have a friend who takes her children to a Chiropractor even when they aren't sick. Why would she do this?

A: Actually, there are more reasons for children to see a Chiropractor regularly than there are for adults. First of all, because of their activities in school and out, children naturally take more spills than an average adult. This is one of the most common reasons people bring their children to a Chiropractor. But the best reason of all is so

that with regular Chiropractic care, children can develop a nearly perfect spine. Not only to help them do better in school, but to gain increased strength, health and vitality throughout their adult lives. To find out all the ways Chiropractic can help your children experience a lifetime of good health, please call us at the number below.

Flowers' Chiropractic Office
2124 N.E. Hancock Street
Portland, Oregon 97212
Phone: (503) 287-5504

Oregon Air National Guard

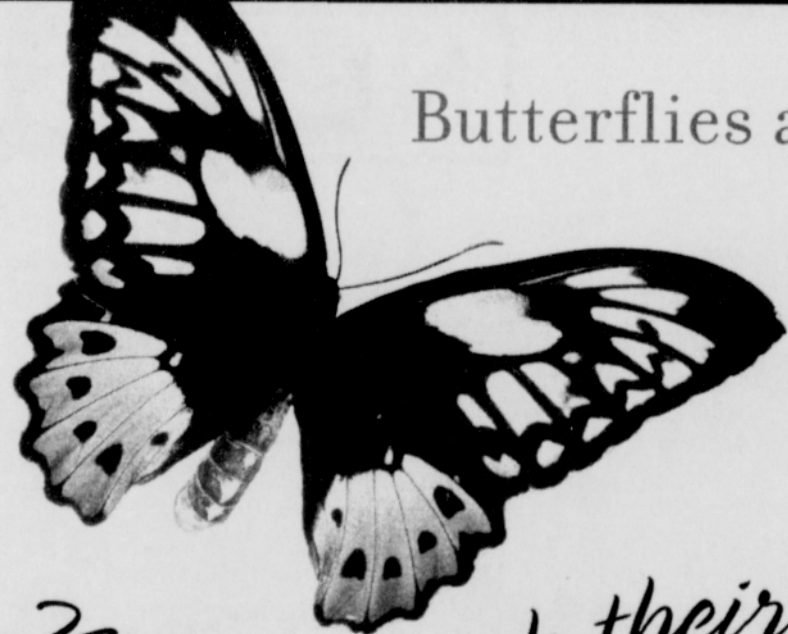
\$20,000 In student loan repayments
\$10,000 Cash Bonus before 5-11-05
Over \$800/Month Educational Benefits
Travel Opportunities • Paid Technical Training



Contact your local Air National Guard Recruiter to determine eligibility.



503.335.4040
1.800.392.1861



Butterflies are back!

Walk through their world

- Discover their secret lives
- Watch them hatch
- Learn how to attract them at home

WINGED WONDERS

May 21 through Labor Day

GRAND OPENING WEEKEND
May 21 and 22
Fun activities for kids!



OREGON ZOO METRO

www.oregonzoo.org
Take MAX to the zoo and get 50¢ off zoo admission