

## Parent's Corner

BY RON HERNDON

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), called the "Nation's Report Card," measures the academic preparedness of American students state by state. Its 2009 report shared the following about Oregon's children:

Fourth grade students able to read at "proficient level or higher:" Black students 10 percent; Latino students 11 percent. Shamefully, the NAEP report for reading proficiencies had the exact same paltry scores in 2009: Black students, 10 percent; Latino Students, 11 percent. Nearly a decade later and there's been no improvement in Oregon's academic prepared-



# Making Good Teachers, Principals

ness, not a smidgen.

Millions of dollars are spent on compensatory programs that are purportedly designed to get children to grade level. These efforts include, for example, Title I, English as a Second Language, Bilingual Education, Special Education, in addition to a school district's general fund dollars. It appears money may not be the primary problem.

One of the glaring failures in Oregon's educational system is its inadequate training and preparation of teachers. Principals' training is worst than inadequate. The public would not knowingly board a commercial airline if pilots were trained as carelessly as teachers and principals.

The overwhelming majority of teachers and principals enter the field of education because they care deeply about children. They want to help children acquire the skills and knowledge needed to live independent and fulfilling

lives. But the training provided to prospective teachers and principals is a disservice.

There is no requirement that the professors in Oregon's colleges of education have been exemplary teachers or principals. Exemplary is defined as 90 percent of their own public school students consistently having performed at or above grade level.

This is not a complicated proposition. If a professor never had 90 percent of their public school students performing at grade level, how can they instruct novice teachers on how to help 90 percent of their students perform reading or math at grade level? It doesn't make sense to have a professional strategy that says, "Do as I say, not as I do, or ever did!"

Commercial pilots receive the majority of their training from pilots that have flown successfully for many years. Electricians,

plumbers, carpenters and doctors are trained for many years by individuals that are experts in their field, successful practitioners. Don't Oregon taxpayers deserve to know why this logical approach to professional teaching preparation is conveniently suspended for those who work in public education with our children?

Lest we overlook the preparation for becoming a principal of a school, it should come as no surprise that there is no requirement that a principal has a record of being a successful teacher with 90 percent or more of his or her students performing at grade level. There also is no requirement that principal training is conducted by individuals who were successful principals with 90 percent or more of their students performing at grade level.

Here are some actions that can be taken now to help teachers, principals and most of all children. And it shouldn't cost an

additional dollar.

\*All students who are learning to become teachers in schools of education must be taught by professors who were successful reading teachers, with 90 percent or more of their public school students attaining grade level (the 90 percent rule). To graduate from a college of education, a prospective teacher must be observed successfully teaching children to read. Same with math. (Remember, you can't become a licensed electrician unless you have been observed successfully wiring a house.)

\*Eighty percent of the instruction in an Oregon school of education must be provided by current or former teachers and principals who were successful in the past, again the 90 percent rule. Faculty must include individuals who have successfully educated low-income and minority students. If you can't find these folks in Oregon, then use Skype or video conferencing to access the best national and international academic talent.

\*School districts' in-service training should be managed only by successful teachers and principals, the 90 percent rule. Current teachers and principals deserve to be coached by the most accomplished practitioners.

\*Local cadres of Oregon's most successful teachers and principals (the 90 percent rule) should determine textbooks, instructional methods, lesson plans, and the minutest part of the school day, for all classrooms and schools that have 20 percent or more children below grade level in any subject area.

Final thoughts. If you think the 90 percent success rate for teaching kids to read at grade level is an unrealistically high expectation for teacher and principal performance, what rate of academic failure, and its attendant life-long collateral damage, would you find acceptable with our children?

Yes, many of these ideas for improving the performance of teachers and principals were part of an extensive article 11 years ago in the Oregonian. But nothing changed. Why?

The educational system operates first and foremost to meet the needs of adults: Adults who train teachers and administrators; adults who teach or administer schools; adults on school boards; and sadly, you and me, the taxpayers who allow this recurring travesty to continue.

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