



QR code for
Portland Observer
Online



Local Theater Director Profiled

*Kevin Jones writes
about police incident*

See story, page 3



School Superintendent Leaving

*Carole Smith
packing up after
lead crisis report*

See Local News, page 3

The Portland Observer 46

'City of Roses'



Volume XLV
Number 29



www.portlandobserver.com
Wednesday • July 20, 2016



Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity *46 years of
community service*



PHOTO COURTESY NAIM HASAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Albina Head Start staff members Valerie Thomas and Evelyn Lopez join hands with their preschool kids and long time Portland education advocate Serena Stoudamire Wesley (center) during a special visit earlier this year. The most diverse Head Start staff in Oregon is poised to be on the losing end of a new state law that penalizes early education providers that hire parents and people of color with practical experience over new employees with college degrees.

Preschool Promise Conflict

New requirements fail kids of color, advocates say

BY CERVANTE POPE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Early education serves as an important avenue for a child's transition into their future formative years, but recently implemented legislation could negatively impact some of these children culturally.

A shift in requirements rolled in by the Oregon Preschool Promise demands a Bachelor of Arts degree from present and future early development educators,

which could potentially hinder the needed educational relationship between minority students and their culturally experienced preschool instructors.

Part of the legislation, which passed in December, is beneficial. The Oregon Department of Education's Early Learning Division seeks to award a handful of early learning facilities with funded contracts that would expand preschool options across the state. But the attempt to increase the quality of instructors in the process risks isolating kids of color, especially at Albina Head Start, the most diverse Head Start staff in Oregon, a program with a decade of flawless federal reviews and annual local audits.

According to longtime backers of the

organization, the legislation devalues the experience of well-trained instructors who have deep cultural knowledge and parenting experience to create good learning conditions for some of our most vulnerable children.

Kali Ladd, executive director for the KairosPDX Early Learning network, says the problem with Oregon Promise is that there are "unintended consequences." KairosPDX is a non-profit organization that tackles some of the consequences of Portland's low minority graduation rates and educational inequity.

The group provides culturally competent consulting and services to current in-home providers and families, friends and neighbors who serve under-represented

youth including low-income youth and youth of color.

KairosPDX has been in place in Portland for years, including Albina Head Start, whose instructors risk being negatively affected by the Preschool Promise decree.

"In my 40 plus years with Head Start, I have seen absolutely no connection between a BA and a good teacher," says Ron Herndon, the director of Albina Head Start. "This is not about professionalizing; we don't need this veneer of respectability placed upon us by people on the outside that feel this is going to help."

According to Herndon, Albina Head Start has the most diverse demographics

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15