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Gifted School Protests Closure

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the move as a form of displacement and gentrification. Some Access parents also expressed disinterest in the move, saying the school on North Gaitenbein Avenue was too small for their first through eighth grade students.

Access is currently located in the former Rose City Park school in northeast Portland, which is being prepared to be reopened as a neighborhood school as part of a massive refiguring of schools for

the east side of Portland adding two new middle schools, including the former Harriet Tubman Middle School in north Portland.

A new proposal would dissolve Access' 335 student body into several schools beginning in the 2018-19 school year.

Students chanted "we need Access, don't split the Atoms" (the Atoms are the school's mascot) as they waved signs in green school t-shirts during Monday's protest.

Jennifer Ellis, the school's parent-teacher association president,

said the Access focus option program, which caters to "talented and gifted" students was designed to work best when their students are under one roof.

"Access is an alternative program serving students who have highly accelerated learning needs and who have demonstrated a need for a cohort-driven approach to supporting their social/emotional development," Ellis said.

The PPS board is set to vote on the proposal to split up Access on Oct. 24.

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Supporting Writers of High Merit

Samiya Bashir and Rene Denfeld, two female Portland writers of high merit, have been honored with academic fellowships and a cash award of \$20,000 by the Regional Arts and Culture Council to sustain or enhance their creative process.

Bashir brings her poetry off the written page in multi-disciplinary projects that involve video art, sculpture, installation and performance. She is a woman writer of color who actively provides creative opportunities for other writers. The council's fellowship panel also recognized her for writing that speaks to her specific experience as a queer, first-generation Somali-Ameri-



Samiya Bashir



Rene Denfeld

can poet/maker, yet is accessible to wide audiences.

Denfeld is a novelist who grew up in north Portland and whose social justice work examining issues critical to our times, includ-

ing poverty and child abuse, is at the heart of her writing. She has authored nonfiction books, essays and her second novel, "The Child Finder" was released this September by Harper.

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