

Poverty

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too. Toxic stress slows brain development, perhaps even before birth.

“We are learning more about that over time,” Ratcliffe says. “... children don’t have the power to change things, but they can absorb and be impacted by the stress in the family; the up and down changes in income, and ability to pay bills; and to be living more on the edge; and also the impact on kids of changing schools. The stresses can have a ripple effect on their success in the future.”

‘It really is about early investment in children and families and that if we don’t invest early we have costs later on down the road’

Moving for negative reasons, such as economic hardship or family breakup, was also associated with being less likely to graduate from high school, the study found. That echoes findings in the 2009 report by Eco Northwest for the Black Parent Initiative that looked at the reasons for low graduation rates among Portland’s African American students. The report found Black students were far more likely than others to change schools.

Ratcliffe says she’d like to see school districts agree to retain students, whenever

possible, even when they move out of district.

Anti-Poverty Programs Help

After analyzing 40 years of data on poverty, Ratcliffe found that the only way to lift substantial numbers of people out of poverty is to identify and help poor families as early as possible.

She points to resources, such as the Women’s Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program; childcare subsidies; transportation assistance; and expanded paid leave policies. They help keep families stable and support working parents, she says.

“It really is about early investment in children and families and that if we don’t invest early we have costs later on down the road: we have kids who are not being productive in the labor market; there is incarceration. So I think it is better to put our resources in early to invest in these children rather than to assume the costs later.”

Four out of Every 10 Black Babies are Born into Poverty

Nationally the statistics show that 5 in every 100 White children live in poverty for at least half their childhood. But for Black children that figure rises to 40 of every 100 children. What’s more the problem seems to be growing, not shrinking.

When Dr. Martin Luther King launched his “War on Poverty”, he talked about the

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the district slow down or stop its process and give schools more time to figure out solutions to their low-enrollment.

“They produced six scenarios a few months ago, and on Jan. 14 they came up with two further scenarios that involve school closures,” Strong said.

“We feel like the process took a long time but the school closures didn’t come up until the final hour.”

The district says that officials have been looking at enrollment across the district, something that North and Northeast parents dispute.

“Strong schools depend on excellent teachers, great leaders, creative community partnerships and committed parents,” the Portland school district’s proposal says. “They also need enough students to garner enough teachers to offer a well-rounded academic program that prepares students for a successful future.

“Portland Public Schools has been working across the school district to balance enrollment to provide stable and sustainable conditions that better support learning.”

Nevertheless, a letter drafted last week by

Woodlawn parents and sent to the Portland Public Schools management reads exactly like letters sent one year ago by parents at Humboldt Elementary and the Harriet Tubman Young Women’s Leadership Academy, which was fast-tracked for closure even though it was the only science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) school in the state focusing on girls of color.

“Our school community wants more time

The Jefferson Cluster Feedback forum is Saturday, Jan. 26 at 1 p.m. at Jefferson High School, 5210 N Kerby. The protest is at noon

to turn things around,” the Woodlawn PTA pleads in its letter. “We have a good momentum going here. The Oregon Department of Education has designated us a Priority School. We hope to have the time to benefit from that designation.”

The level of outrage last year over the quick closure of Tubman drew in local lawmakers and city commissioners as well as

Carter

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Black historical figures and specifically inquire about Black people who made history in Washington. Once they decided on a figure, the two would find books on him/her and read them together.

Carter says he carried this with him throughout his life.

He graduated from Stanford University in 2001, where he majored in history with a focus on enslavement in the U.S. south. Following that, he received his Masters in museum studies at University of Washington in 2006.

While at Stanford, Carter got the opportu-

nity to work on the King Papers Project, a large-scale research venture focused on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., headed by Dr. Clayborne Carson. Carter says the experience cemented his love for history.

During his first year at UW, Carter got involved with the Northwest African American Museum.

It is the only museum that focuses on the Black experience in the Northwest. Carter was one of the founding members. He started as a volunteer, became an intern, and then an education director. Currently, he’s the deputy director and head curator for the

Weekend Service

More than 1,000 volunteers helped 44 organizations in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Weekend of Service. These volunteers worked on projects ranging from prepping bikes for a holiday kid’s bike drive in NE Portland to sewing baby blankets in Beaverton. The event, hosted by United Way of the Columbia-Willamette and Hands On Greater Portland, was sponsored by The Boeing Company. Together, the volunteers generated \$76,235 in value from 3,500 hours of volunteer service.



PHOTO COURTESY UNITED WAY

plight of 40 million people. Today official poverty estimates count almost \$50 million Americans in poverty. And while it is true that the population has also grown, experts say the official poverty level doesn’t measure real economic need in 2013.

“It’s well understood by policy experts that the official definition of poverty is out of date and it undercounts real economic need,” says Juan Carlos Ordóñez, of the

Oregon Center for Public Policy.

The center issued a fact sheet for Martin Luther King Day, showing that poverty in Oregon is persistent, and disproportionately affects Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos and Pacific Islanders. Poverty among White Oregonians is almost 15 percent, but for Blacks, Native Americans and Latinos it is almost 30 percent. And for Oregon’s Pacific islanders it is 36 percent.

corporate leaders in the Portland metro area, all of whom literally begged the Portland Public Schools Board not to shutter the school. Political leaders predicted that the district’s abandonment of the all-girl STEM school would impact the economy in the long run.

Despite promises of money, mentorships and unprecedented support from the corporate sector, the board voted to shutter the

school anyway, with the lone “no” vote cast by Board Chair Martin Gonzales.

Meanwhile, Oregon Schools Czar Rudy Crew is traveling the state talking about how to create more STEM education opportunities.

Last week nearly 200 parents and community members came to a parent meeting at Woodlawn to talk about what they can do

to keep their school open.

Woodlawn parent Rachael Banks cites the Portland schools’ new Equity Policy in calling for a more thorough look at how transfer policies are hurting the schools that keep landing on the chopping block.

“The district needs to take a comprehensive approach to enrollment balancing, especially the transfer policy and the role it plays in under-enrolled schools,” Banks says.

“This can’t be a piecemeal approach where you’re shutting down schools one at a time.”

Banks says that another issue that comes up is trust – and that the district has acknowledged they have a trust issue with parents in the Jefferson cluster.

“They need to have courage to be able to fight the status quo and do something about it—it’s a bigger issue and it needs a bigger solution,” Banks said.

“That’s what we really want – an overall district-wide strategic plan to fix, stabilize and make all the schools equitable,” Strong said. “What they’re doing in the Jefferson Cluster is another short term solution.”