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OUR VIEW

Judging success on a harder test

Oregon students are preparing for their first crack at the Smarter Balanced test.

You can forgive them, and teachers and administrators, for suffering from testing whiplash, and maybe even some PTSD (post-traumatic test disorder).

The top-down, executive branch approach

to education reform has tried to reinvigorate primary and secondary education in the country over the last decade — to varying degrees of success. But there is no debate that the United States remains decisively behind many European countries and many first-world Asian countries in quality of education. The much maligned and misunderstood Smarter Balanced tests and Common Core curriculum is the latest attempt to resuscitate our education reputation.

It won't come easily.

Students in grades three through eight and high school juniors will be subjected to seven hours of intensive testing over the next two months. The goal is to measure their reading, writing, listening, math, research and thinking skills. Teachers are prepared for the worst; more than half of all students who take the test are expected to receive "failing" grades. And administrations are busy pivoting to the new curriculum so

more students pass the challenging tests every year from here on out.

Anything new, unproven and difficult makes people fearful. Many teachers have expressed that fear, and some have passed those fears along to their students. Most athletic coaches know that confidence is key to success and convincing their

players to give their best effort. And what is true on the pitch is also true on paper. We think school officials should remind students that Smarter Balanced tests the U.S. education system as much as it tests the students themselves.

Sure, it won't be easy for the majority of students

to see their low scores, especially for children who are used to getting good grades. But those good grades in less-challenging work weren't cutting it on the international scene. This country had to up its game and any short-term setbacks will make our children smarter (and balanced) in the long run.

For now, remind your son and daughter, or niece or nephew, to take a deep breath. To try hard but not be overwhelmed. To remember their self-worth no matter what a computerized score tells them. The key mantra should be the old parental standby that all young people should hear over and over again: Do your best.

Students in grades three through eight, as well as high school juniors, will be subjected to seven hours of intensive testing.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Difficulties remain in restoring lands to the Klamath Tribes

The (Bend) Bulletin

The efforts of the Klamath Indian Tribes of Southern Oregon to get back some land are back again where they started: No land.

The tribes signed on to the agreement aimed at settling the Klamath Basin's water problems last year. As part of the agreement, the federal government would pay to purchase the Mazama Forest. It was owned at the time by Fidelity National Financial, the same group that owned the Skyline Forest west of Bend. That land could be a critical piece of the effort to restore the tribes to financial health.

Before the efforts to terminate the existence of tribes in the mid and late 1950s, the tribes' finances were in relatively good shape. They owned nearly a million acres of land in south-central Oregon, much of it timber. When their tribal status was ended over their objections, they were paid \$44,000 per member for the land.

The tribes went from a group whose income was at least 93 percent of their neighbors' to one whose numbers on welfare were extraordinarily high.

In the summer of 1986, the tribes had their status — minus the land — restored. They've been working to get at least some land back ever since.

The water settlement promised to do that. The tribes held an option to purchase the Mazama Forest from Fidelity once Congress allocated the money to make that possible. But Congress dallied, negotiations with Fidelity had their problems, the option lapsed, and they have no land.

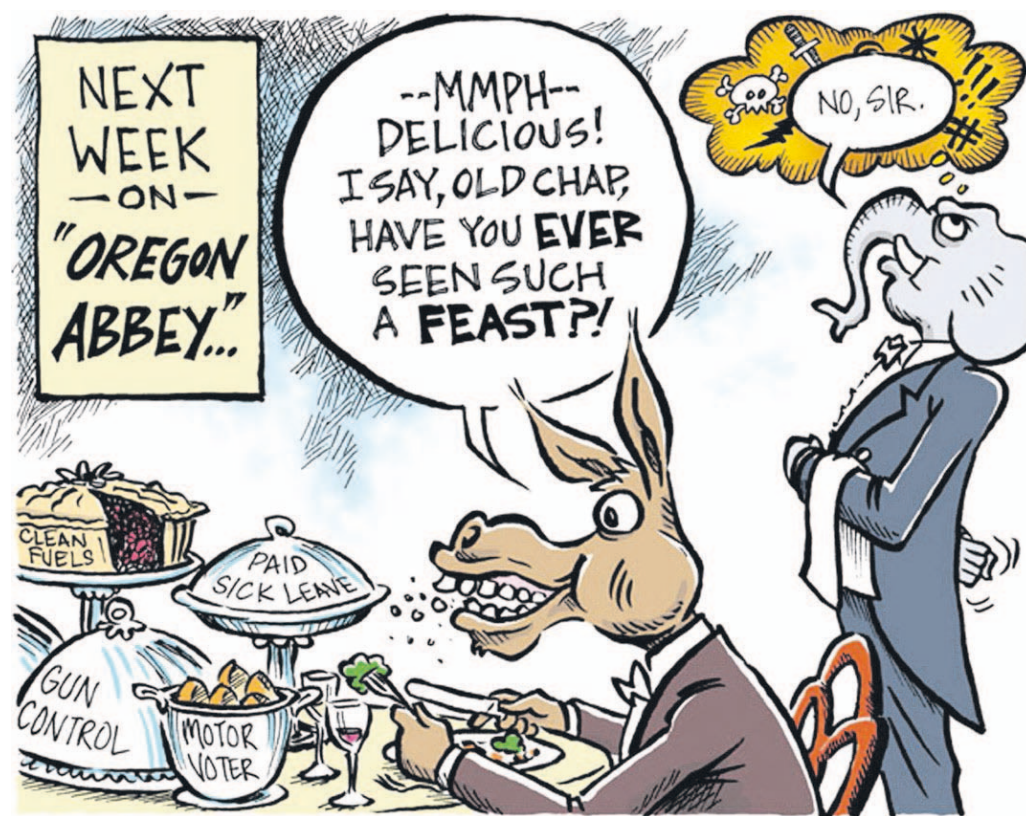
Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., worked to push a bill through granting money for the tribes at the end of the last session. He's reintroduced that bill.

Equally important, Rep. Greg Walden, R-Hood River, and Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., are working together to find a solution that makes all sides happy. It will take more than Congress to get the job done.

The forest's new owners have not yet made clear what they think of divvying up the land they bought for several sellers. Unless they're willing to do so, congressional action can't make the sale a reality.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

The field is flat

Like a lot of people who pay attention to such things, I had assumed that Democrats had a huge advantage going into next year's presidential race. Democrats do really well among the growing demographic groups, like Hispanics, single people and the young. Republicans, meanwhile, are doing sensationally well with just about every shrinking group. If 67-year-old rural white men were the future of the electorate, the GOP would be rolling.

But there's a growing body of evidence to suggest that, in fact, Democrats do not enter this election with an advantage. There are a series of trends that may cancel out the Democratic gains with immigrants, singles and the like.

We first began to notice these counterforces in the high-immigrant red states that were supposed to start turning purple by now — places like Texas, Arizona and Georgia. New types of voters have, indeed, flooded into these places, but as Ronald Brownstein points out in The National Journal, since 1992, Democratic presidential nominees have averaged only 44.5 percent of the vote in Georgia, 43.7 percent of the vote in Arizona and a pathetic 40.4 percent of the vote in Texas.

Instead of turning pink or purple, these states have become more thoroughly Republican — from school board elections on up.

Nationally, three big things are happening to at least temporarily hold off the Democratic realignment. First, the aging of the electorate is partially canceling out the diversifying of the electorate. People tend to get more Republican as they get older, and they vote at higher rates. And older people are moving to crucial states. In Arizona, Barack Obama won 63 percent of the young adults, but only 29 percent of the oldsters.

This aging effect could have a big impact in the swing states of the Midwest, like Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan and Pennsylvania. These states have generally gone Democratic in presidential years, but it's hard to miss the growing Republican strength at every other level. As Brownstein notes, Republicans have a 42-to-18 advantage in U.S. House seats in these states. They control the governorships in all but Pennsylvania. They control both statehouses in all these states save the Iowa Senate.

Second, Democrats continue to lose support among the white working class. In 2008, Obama carried 40 percent of white voters with a high school degree. By 2012, that was down to 36 percent. As John B. Judis points out in a National Journal piece called "The Emerging Republican Advantage," the tilt of the white working class to the GOP



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

has been even more pronounced in other races. In 2006, Democrats got 44 percent of the white-working-class vote in U.S. House races. By 2014, they got only 34 percent. In 2009, Republicans had a 20-seat advantage in House districts that were majority white working class. Today, they have a 125-seat advantage.

Most surprising, Democrats are now doing worse among college-educated voters. Obama won white college graduates in 2008, but he lost them to Mitt Romney in 2012. In Colorado, for example, Obama lost 8 points in his support from college-educated voters from 2008 to 2012.

Voters have a lot of anxieties. But they also have a template in their heads for what economic dynamism looks like.

White college grads are drifting away from Democrats down-ballot, too. And, most significant, there are signs that Hispanic voters, at least in Sun Belt states, are getting more Republican as they move up the educational ladder.

Surveys and interviews give us some sense of what's going on. Voters have a lot of economic anxieties. But they also have a template in their heads for what economic dynamism looks like.

That template does not include a big role for government. Polls show that faith in government is near all-time lows. In a Gallup survey, voters listed dysfunctional government as the nation's No. 1 problem. In fact, American voters' traditional distrust has morphed and hardened. They used to think it was bloated and ineffective and rigged to help those who need it least.

When many of these voters think of economic dynamism, they think of places like Texas, the top job producer in the nation over the past decade, and, especially, places like Houston, a low-regulation, low-cost-of-living place. In places like Wisconsin, voters in the middle-class private sector support candidates who cut state pensions and pass right-to-work laws, so that economic governance can be more Texas-style.

In short, economic philosophy is mitigating the effect of demographic change, at least for a little while longer. Political guru Charlie Cook asks: Will this be a "Time for a Change" election or will this be a "Changing American Demographics" election? I suspect it will be a "Time for a Change" election. The crucial swing voters will be white and Hispanic college graduates in suburban office parks. They are not into redistribution or that Sen. Ted Cruz opened his campaign at Liberty University.

The 2016 campaign is starting on level ground.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

BMCC supports our economy, bond deserves our support

support the students of BMCC.

Steve and Janet Williams
Hermiston

For more than 50 years, Blue Mountain Community College has provided students, young and old, the opportunity to increase their education and improve their value to local employers through a variety of programs; from diesel mechanic to dental assistant to nursing and more.

The college is now looking to expand their programs to include a Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center in Hermiston and a Workforce Training and Early Learning Center in Boardman. Funding of these centers, along with essential improvements for safety, security, and other building upgrades is included in the proposed BMCC Bond, ballot measure 130-06.

Providing these programs will allow our students the educational opportunity they need to prepare for employment in these growing industries in Morrow and Umatilla counties. The economic impact of educating our students multiplies as they settle in to careers, invest in housing, and raise their families in our communities.

While we may not have children that will benefit from these BMCC programs, we recognize the value of providing these opportunities to other students. Please join us in voting yes on ballot measure 130-06 to

PBS television program reveals info of Israelite history

Everyone interested in the origins of the Israelite people will want to see a two-hour NOVA special that aired on OPB the evening of March 25 entitled "The Bible's Buried Secrets."

The title had me skeptical, but it turned out that it presented the latest up-to-date information about what modern archaeology in Israel reveals about the origins of the Israelites.

Professor Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University, in my opinion the top of the crop in the field of archaeology in Israel, is among the stellar archaeologists interviewed.

Interested persons can watch the video by going to www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova. Type the title of the show into the Search box and click. It's in the third line down with a date of 03/25/2015.

A word of caution to the overly devout: It's not exactly what you learned in Sunday School. But as cosmologist Neal deGrasse Tyson said in a recent TV interview, "Science is right, whether you believe it or not."

Jack T. Sanders
Pendleton