

EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to Pendleton kindergarten literacy rates, which have shown solid improvement after the district and taxpayers made a significant investment in its early learning center.

Former superintendent Jon Peterson and the school board worked tirelessly to get the district's federal funding resources focused at the Pendleton Early Learning Center when it opened in 2015. Two teachers and six assistants now work under the center's Title I program.

There are drawbacks to making that immense investment at such a young age. In this age of slim budgets and exploding PERS costs, there is little intervention in the district for children who need it later in their academic careers. We wish there were ways to support and afford that, too.

But the early learning center approach is working. This spring, 93 percent of Pendleton students found themselves in the top tier of a test that assessed the building blocks of early literacy. That's an excellent sign.

The all-in approach on getting kindergarten students all on the same page — to walk into their elementary school on the first day on equal footing,

no matter their parents' income level or the amount of time they have to read to their young children — is a smart idea. Here's hoping it pays off 12 years down the road, and for many decades after that.

A tip of the hat to the beginning of the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation, which has recently been created to support a wide variety of important causes in the city.

Pendleton has long perfected this idea with its own community foundation trust, which is preparing next month to celebrate its 90th anniversary and its legacy of more than \$4 million in donations to local nonprofits.

Hermiston has the opportunity to begin its own legacy of community charitable giving through a vehicle that both major corporate donors and small individuals can take pride in. A foundation trust is an excellent opportunity to increase that community involvement, so that everyone feels their little contribution makes a difference.

Choosing trustworthy, empathetic and fiscally responsible board members is critical for the new foundation to



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pre kindergarten teacher Sarah Leonard writes down words starting with the letter "s" while teaching her class at the Pendleton Early Learning Center.

succeed, and we know the talent pool is deep in Hermiston.

These sunny days have us in a hat tipping mood. So we complete our trifecta with a tip to a group of Hermiston-based nurses who are bringing the national "Start by Believing" campaign to Umatilla County.

They are first presenting the message to groups inside Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston, and they will later speak with community groups, law enforcement agencies and other organizations.

Their message is clear: Start

by believing. Instead of blaming a sexual assault victim or reacting with disbelief or embarrassment, the program encourages people to respond with acceptance or at least an open mind.

That belief and support goes a long way. Some studies show that 63 percent of sexual assault crimes go unreported, and in some communities that number may be as high as 90 percent.

That's unacceptable. Before we can start to get our minds around the size of the sexual assault issue, we must help victims feel like they can and should come forward with the truth. If they cannot, predators and abusers will continue to go unpunished.

OTHER VIEWS

When Democrats act like Trump

Shock! Horror! President Donald Trump is actually doing something right.

Sadly, Democrats in Congress are responding in a quite Trumpian way: They seem more concerned with undermining him than supporting a peace process with North Korea. They are on the same side as National Security Adviser John Bolton, quietly subverting attempts to pursue peace.

While international security is complicated, here's a rule of thumb: When you find yourself on the same side as Bolton, go back and re-examine your position. Sure, we all wish that Trump treated Justin Trudeau or Angela Merkel with the respect that he now shows Kim Jong Un. Yes, it seems that Trump has been played by Kim. Yet another way of putting it is that Trump is finally investing in the kind of diplomatic engagement that he used to denounce, and that we should all applaud.

Trump's newfound pragmatism is infinitely preferable to the threat of nuclear war that used to hang over all of us, so it's mystifying to see Democrats carping about any possible North Korea deal.

"Any deal that explicitly or implicitly gives North Korea sanctions relief for anything other than the verifiable performance of its obligations to dismantle its nuclear and missile arsenal is a bad deal," seven Democratic senators, including Chuck Schumer, warned in a letter to Trump.

The letter also insisted on "anywhere, anytime" inspections of suspected North Korean nuclear sites, as well as those linked to its chemical and biological warfare programs.

It's almost unimaginable that North Korea will allow such intrusive inspections — any country would resist having an enemy poke around its military bases, underground bomb shelters and border fortifications. So these Democrats are essentially saying that no plausible deal will pass muster.

"The Democrats have gone overboard in the conditions they listed in the letter," said Joel Wit, a North Korea watcher at the Stimson Center in Washington. "If they're serious, it's a prescription for failure because no one could achieve the conditions. It's maybe payback for everything they were dealt in the Iran deal."

"It's like role reversal," Wit added. "For years Democrats criticized Republicans for not wanting to engage North Korea. Now that Republicans want to engage North Korea, the Democrats are preparing to criticize them."

I appreciate that it's galling for Democrats to see Trump present himself as a great strategist who has forced North Korea to knuckle under. White House aide Larry Kudlow boasted on Fox News: "North Korea

coming to the negotiating table has a lot to do with President Trump's very firm stand."

Poppycock. North Korean leaders have been eager for decades to meet with an American president; it's just that no previous president agreed for fear of legitimizing the regime. It's actually Trump who has made stunning compromises — holding a get-acquainted summit with Kim without any prospect of near-term denuclearization.

The real hero here is South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, who shrewdly used the Olympics to kick-start the peace process. Trump and Kim won't get a Nobel Peace Prize, but if the peace process survives, Moon will be a worthy recipient.

For decades, especially after Bill Clinton's 1994 "Agreed Framework" with North Korea, it was conservative Republicans who were the spoilers on nuclear deals with North Korea and Iran alike.

This Republican petulance was bad for America. Bolton helped kill the Agreed Framework, so that North Korea hugely expanded its weapons program. Similar petulance led Trump and Bolton to try to destroy the Iran nuclear deal this spring; as a result, Iran this week announced that it was increasing its uranium enrichment capacity. Boy, that went well.

Now a similar partisan petulance seems to be turning some Democrats into spoilers. Trump's engagement with North Korea has been chaotic and should have begun with working-level talks, but it's still better for leaders to exchange handshakes than missiles.

Granted, there's plenty of reason to be nervous about Trump's deal-making with North Korea. How will Trump manage Kim when he can't even manage a summit with the Philadelphia Eagles?

Still, even if North Korea won't hand over nuclear weapons in the next few years, I can imagine it committing in coming months to a sustained moratorium on nuclear tests and long-range missile tests, on production of plutonium and uranium fuel, on transfer of nuclear technology to other countries, such as Syria. North Korea might also destroy an ICBM or two and accept inspectors at its nuclear sites in Yongbyon. Trump and Kim might agree to exchange liaison offices and to declare peace on the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea might well cheat, and these are half-steps, not rapid denuclearization. But half-steps toward peace are better than full strides toward war.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. He has been a *New York Times* columnist since 2001.



OTHER VIEWS

Disappointing to see vaccine progress recede

The Baker City Herald

Oregon's progress on vaccinating younger children against preventable diseases such as measles and whooping cough was short-lived.

Disappointingly so. In 2015, the first year the state required parents to at least pretend to be interested in learning about vaccines before they claimed a nonmedical exemption for their children by watching a 10-minute video, the rate of such exemptions among kids of kindergarten age dropped by 7 percent to 5.8 percent.

That was still well above the 1 percent figure in 2000, but at least the trend was positive.

Unlike vaccines themselves, however, the beneficial effect of the new law didn't persist.

In 2016 the rate of nonmedical exemptions for kindergartners rose to 6.2 percent, and it went up again, to 6.5 percent, in 2017. This year, the state announced recently, the rate has surpassed the rate before the law took effect, rising to 7.5 percent.

To be clear, we're dealing here with children who have no medical reason, such as a compromised immune system, to avoid vaccines. Their parents are choosing to ignore the advice of doctors, who, almost without exception, recommend children who have no medical issues receive the full slate of vaccinations. The logic is impeccable — the evidence proving vaccines are safe and effective, with exceedingly rare exceptions, is overwhelming.

The situation is somewhat better, generally speaking, in Baker schools. The percentage of students who have had all recommended vaccines ranges from 97 percent at Baker High School to 77 percent at Keating. South Baker's rate is 96 percent, Haines is at 94 percent, and Brooklyn and Baker Middle School both 93 percent.

Still, the kindergarten trend is worrisome. As we've written before, we urge the Oregon Legislature to do what it failed to do a few years ago, and pass a law ending the vaccine exemption for students based on reasons other than medical necessity.

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