

School:

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not take the steps to improve education only making supporting programs that fit their agenda. This is done to the detriment of learning.”

But another Deschutes County survey taker, a Democrat, said her school board was “not doing enough to support POC & LGBT community. Racism, sexism, & homophobia are rampant in Bend & concerns by parents are ignored. ... They talk the talk, but don’t walk the walk.”

In Clackamas County, Cris Waller said her local school board was “taken over by conservatives” in the last election.

“I’ve heard from people I know about what a disheartening time it is to be a school board because of the relentless pressure from right-wing groups,” Waller said when reached by Pamplin Media Group. She said that the same groups that have been taking over school board meetings have been taking over Clackamas County’s board of commissioners.

In Washington County,

MORE INFORMATION

The Oregon Values and Beliefs Center is committed to the highest level of public opinion research. To help obtain that, the nonprofit is building a large research panel of Oregonians to ensure that all voices are represented in discussions of public policy in a valid and statistically reliable way. Selected panelists earn points for their participation, which can be redeemed for cash or donated to a charity.

one woman said voters in her community “managed to keep crazy, fringe characters” off the school board. “However, they are banging at the door to get in with their white-pride, Christian-zealot fervor.”

Kwee Heong Tan, also of Washington County, said his local school board “cares about admin and non-education areas like artificial grass, while textbooks are old, and emphasis on AP subjects are reduced due to lack of teachers.”

While Oregonians are split on whether they are being served and represented by local school leadership, the survey shows broad support (70% or higher) for an array of taxpayer-funded family support services like tutoring, sports, after-school clubs, children’s health care and youth mental

health services.

Even those services that garnered the least support, like culturally inclusive learning materials and required cultural awareness and implicit-bias training for school staff, showed 70% of those polled felt they were valuable.

When it comes to supporting childcare and early learning programs, particularly for kids with special needs or disabilities, more than half (56%) of Oregonians say it’s “very important” to offer childcare and learning programs. More than 86% of those polled said it’s somewhat or very important to fund programs for special needs children.

Similarly, 79% said it was somewhat or very important to make childcare more affordable for families through additional

government funding.

“Women are more likely than men to express strong support for using taxpayer funds to bolster early learning and childhood programs and services,” the OVBC noted in its summary of survey results. “Lower-income residents are also more supportive.”

Still, residents are mixed on how to pay for those services. In Multnomah County, which enacted new tax measures in 2020, and in Portland, specifically, which now has the highest state and local combined income-tax rate in the nation, higher-income earners are feeling the squeeze.

“I currently pay over \$500 per month in property tax. I get a little over \$1,000 from SS. I am raising my grandchildren. Do the math,” one woman in Multnomah County, who identifies as a Democrat with a “somewhat liberal” social ideology, told surveyors. “I cringe at the thought of all these well-meaning projects being proposed, knowing full well it will be property taxes that pay for it. Then all the 20-30 year-olds voting it all in and then whining about high rent.”

STEM:

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are heard,” GO STEM Hub Program Director Stefanie Holloway said.

During last year’s event, the organization targeted fourth grade students after their age range and older were sent home for at-home learning due to the pandemic.

“It’s a pretty pivotal point,” Melville said of fourth grade. “It’s a great point in time where students transition from learning to read to then having the opportunity to learn and find their own interests.”

This year’s kits included several upgrades and alterations, such as paper straws for the gravity racer kit. Another new element was a partnership with Amazon Web Services. Amazon’s philanthropic branch covered the \$46,000 project in its efforts to reach young learners in rural counties.

The kits were funded by Oregon Community Foundation last year, through a grant specific to COVID-19 relief. Organizers at the GO STEM Hub were thrilled to partner with Amazon, utilizing their resources to help spread STEM education in Eastern Oregon.

“The folks at Amazon Web Services are very passionate about investing in education in Eastern Oregon,” Holloway said. “They’re very innovative and forward thinking.”

Growing footprint

The partnership has spawned numerous future possibilities, including a mobile maker space that

is in the works — the vehicle would serve as a STEM classroom on wheels, allowing the GO STEM Hub to bring resources to schools around the region.

“That’s kind of our answer to the regional spread dilemma, because we can bring the STEM classroom all over the region,” Holloway said. “We’re hoping to identify our smallest communities that are lacking in resources to bring these opportunities to them.”

The GO STEM Hub hopes to continue providing learning opportunities for rural students, some of whom may not have access to STEM education. Another big point of emphasis is providing teachers with resources necessary to provide STEM education, as well as offering professional development opportunities.

The organization houses a free lending library, which teachers from around the region can utilize to acquire supplies for experiments and activities. The library includes a catalog which teachers can order from and have the items shipped directly to their schools.

As the GO STEM Hub looks to further grow its footprint and encompass more students and teachers in Eastern Oregon, the to-go STEM kits served as a productive way to bring STEM opportunities to young learners.

“We serve seven counties, so we want to make sure everyone knows who we are and what we can offer,” Holloway said. “We’re able to visit the schools by sending them things like this.”

Bridge:

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received support from politicians, including Oregon Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, as well as state Sen. Bill Hansell of Athena and state Rep. Bobby Levy of Echo.

“This is a project that has been on our radar since the floods last year,” Ken Patterson, an area manager for the

Oregon Department of Transportation, said at the March 2021 press conference.

The bridge’s location on tribal land meant the project wouldn’t ordinarily fall to ODOT, Patterson said. But with the insistence of county officials, Oregon personnel found a way to allocate state resources toward repairing the bridge more quickly.

At that time, Umatilla County Public Works Director Tom Fellows said officials

made plans to remove the bridge earlier, while simultaneously designing the new bridge.

Funding for the bridge replacement originally comes from the federal level, but “trickles down” to become state money. This provides an opportunity to “take savings from one project and move it over to another project,” Fellows said in 2021.

The state, therefore, pays about 89.7% of costs,

Patterson said.

Umatilla County will cover about 10.3% of the project’s overall costs, Dorran said. He added the county also has to cover any “early overages.”

Fellows said the main goal of the project was to shorten its timeline.

Whether the damaged bridge will be demolished this year or not, local residents won’t have to wait until 2027 to again cross the river at Thorn Hollow.



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