

EDITORIALS

Standardized tests for nonstandard kids

Humans come in all shapes, sizes and colors — and abilities. Students are no different. So why are they all tested with one test while in school?

This is the debate around standardized testing, which in Oregon means Smarter Balanced. The test is supposed to show that all students — regardless of shape, size, race, origin or mental ability — are being taught the same standards and not discriminated against.

A test of the standards that all children should be taught in Oregon sounds, on the surface, like a good idea. But that's not what's happening.

Students are being coached on how to pass the tests. Elementary school kids are being taught how to use the computer specifically to take these tests, because they aren't intuitive. The tests are high stakes, with roughly \$140 million in federal funding on the line for school districts throughout Oregon.

If these tests are truly just testing whether or not students are learning the standards — math and language skills expected of high school graduates — then extra time coaching and prepping students should not be required. Just teach them the standards and let the test determine whether the students have learned said standards.

Standardized testing is a result of the No Child Left Behind beast. Regardless of how the name changes on this monster, the idea of 100 percent of students succeeding remains.

While the concept is a good one in theory, it neglects to provide the means necessary to accomplish the ends. Funding continues to dwindle to pay for education, K-12 and higher education.

Students are not "standard."

Students who struggle because of intellectual or physical disabilities, those whose native language differs from English, or those who find themselves bored because they are talented and gifted, and therefore not challenged by curriculum — these students are being left behind, and standardized testing is not helping.

The topic is a 20-sided die, with many facets and arguments. We see the need for a way to test students, and also how student results could be useful for teacher evaluations.

At the same time, it feels like K-12 schools have become an experimental educational laboratory as districts struggle to jump through whatever new hoop legislators throw their way.

It is unfortunate that so much rides on these tests as far as the federal government is concerned. Rather than provide avenues for schools to give students opportunities to succeed, the feds have chosen to punish those who won't conform to take the tests. While that attitude may be changing, the proof is in the pudding, so to speak, and changes have not been signed into law yet.

Oregon is taking a risk by allowing parents the freedom to choose to opt out of standardized testing. With budgets tight everywhere, federal education dollars aren't something to sneeze at.

However, the education revolution has to start somewhere.

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the Itemizer-ObsERVER via fax (503-623-2395) or email (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

- Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.
- Monmouth Planning Commission — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.
- Chemeketa Community College Board of Education — 7 p.m., Salem Campus, building 2, room No. 170, 4000 Lancaster Drive, Salem. 503-399-2517.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

- Polk County Fair Board — 8 a.m., Polk County Fairgrounds and Event Center, Main Building, Meeting Room No. 2, 520 S. Pacific Highway (99W), Rickreall. 503-623-3048.
- Dallas Economic Development Committee — Noon, City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.
- Independence Parks and Recreation Board — 6 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.
- Monmouth Arts and Culture Commission — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

MONDAY, JULY 20

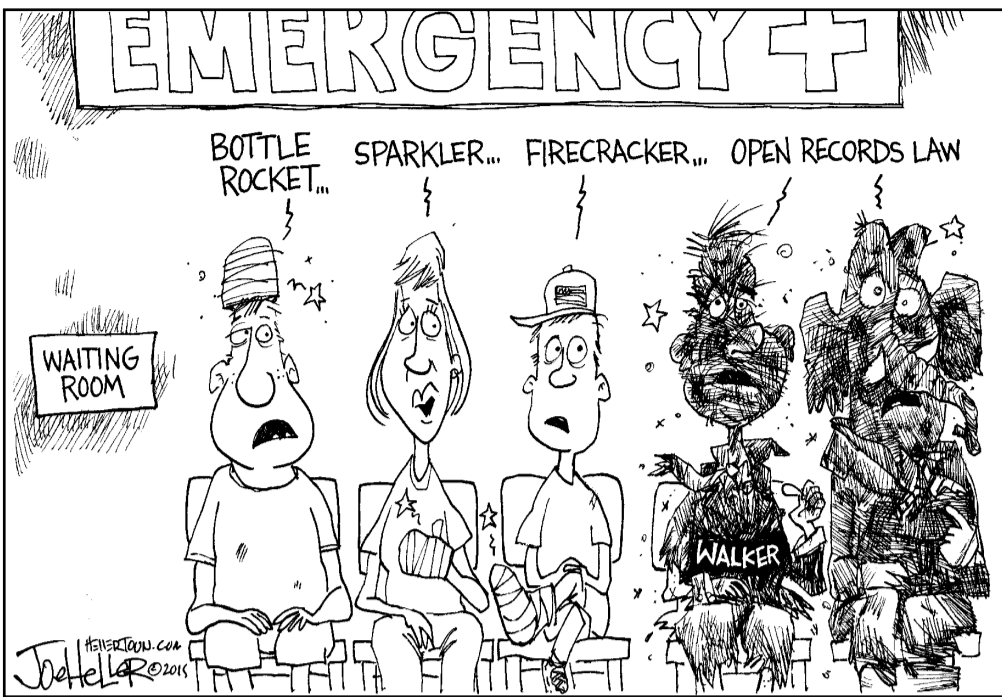
- Dallas School Board — 5:30 p.m. work session, District office board room, 111 SW Ash St., Dallas. 503-623-5594.
- Dallas City Council — 7 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

- Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.
- Independence Historic Preservation Commission — 4 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.
- Monmouth City Council — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

- Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

County gravel roads need fixing

My wife and I live on Highland Road, one of the 250 miles of gravel roads in Polk County.

Over the past two years, we have had 17 flat tires and three destroyed tires caused by or destroyed by sharp rocks on the road.

I have taken two of the destroyed tires to show to the county commissioners.

I was told on both visits that Polk County has the best roads of any county in the state and that the commissioners are proud of their roads.

When I asked if 17 flat tires and three destroyed tires are normal for well-maintained roads, I was told to just buy heavy duty, more

expensive, truck tires for my cars.

When the roads are graded or fresh rock is spread on the road surface, the driving public is used to compact the sharp rocks back into the road surface.

Our rubber tires are used instead of a steel drum roller as compactors. Destroyed tires and flats are to be expected.

Polk County is an urban county that is right next door to the state capital, not an eastern rural county.

We have miles of 19th century roads with a lot of 21st century traffic. Little has been done to improve these antiquated roads over the past 20 years.

It seems like there is little long-term planning and a lot of just getting by.

Am I the only one driving in Polk County having tire damage due to poor roads?

I urge any driver who has had tire problems caused by the poor roads of Polk County to call the commissioners and voice their concerns.

Michael Henich
Independence

Help finding lost spouse appreciated

I would like to thank the many people who helped find my misplaced husband in the power chair on July 9.

I wasn't able to thank you all personally for your kindness and concern: Thank You.

Michelle Hunter
Dallas

WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period.

Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will not be printed.

Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers

should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verification purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organiza-

tions, and must be original submissions to the I-O, not copies of letters sent to other media.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names. The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday.

Reach us at:
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National 'Give Something Away' Day is today

National Give Something Away Day is celebrated annually on July 15. This is a day to give something to someone. It can be something that is a basic necessity like shoes or clothing or something more frivolous like flowers or a balloon bouquet. Spend time with someone in a hospital or just call someone to let them know you are thinking about them. National Give Something Away Day is a day to pay it forward and do something

nice for someone, whether it is someone you know or a stranger.

Celebrate by buying lunch for someone in need. Buy a cup of coffee for the person behind you in line at the coffee shop. Go through your closet and donate clothing you no longer wear to a good cause. Post on social media using #GiveSomethingAwayDay to encourage others to join in paying it forward.

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