

EDITORIALS

Let's stick with one system for a while

The results are in for the first round of testing using the new Smarter Balanced Assessment, which is supposed to be a more difficult test using higher standards.

Overall, district officials are optimistic, scoring higher in some areas — mostly language arts — than expected. Meanwhile, scores in math were lacking across the board. While other results, like those of Perrydale fifth-grade students, were completely lost.

Last year, we suggested that it was too soon to put yet another testing system in place. In the last eight years at least, the standards and testing systems have changed in our K-12 schools, whether changing the definition of "meets" or "exceeds," to redefining the entire system of standards through the adoption of Common Core.

It isn't just confusing for the public, it has to be confusing for teachers, parents and students. How can a student be expected to keep up with the expectations, or help a younger sibling with their homework, when the methods of teaching and what they are learning are constantly changing.

It creates an environment of survival in schools rather than encouraging creativity and hard work. Changing the system each year — standards, testing, curriculum and grading — makes education mean less.

What's worse is the Smarter Balanced Assessment is two-faced. On the one hand, it is allegedly testing whether or not kids are ready for college or a career. On the other, kids do not have to be ready for college or a career to meet graduation requirements. State regulations means a student can score "level 2" on language arts or math and be ready to graduate, when, according to the test itself, a student is not ready for college or a career unless he or she earns "level 3" or "level 4."

To make matters even more complicated, students can do other assignments to show they understand the material to qualify for high school graduation, making the test all but meaningless.

We know not all teenagers are slackers, but if you were asked to take a test for three to four days, and y our knew it had no bearing on your future, how hard would you try to

With this information, it is difficult to take the test results with more than a grain of salt.

All that being said, it would be really nice for folks to just settle down and try keeping somethings the same for a few years. The test is far from perfect, and the fact that it doesn't really matter to a child's future means it is good they have the right to opt-out. The Common Core State Standards are not terrible, though some parents and members of the community are not satisfied with the way they are being taught.

What's more important than finding the "perfect" set of standards or curriculum is some sort of consistency for our schools and students. After all, our children are not laboratory animals to be experimented on year after year.

UBLIC 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, SEPT. 30 • Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk

County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173. THURSDAY, Oct. 1

• Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network executive commit**tee** — 3 p.m., 2965 Ryan Dr. SE, Suite 150, Salem. 503.585.4935. **MONDAY, OCT. 5**

• Central School District Board of Directors — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence. 503-838-0030. • Dallas City Council — 7 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dal-

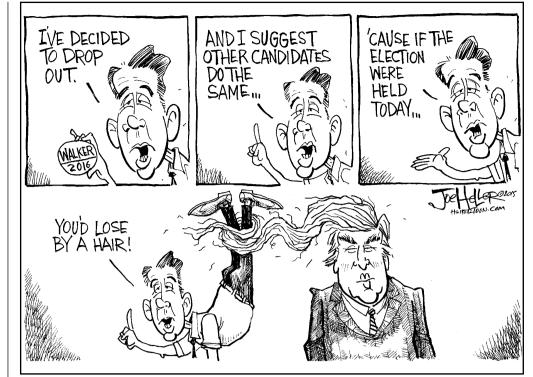
las. 503-831-3502. • Independence Planning Commission — 7 p.m., Independ-

ence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212. TUESDAY, OCT. 6

• Polk County Board of Commissioners — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173. • Dallas Urban Renewal District Advisory Committee -

5:30 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502. • Monmouth City Council — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.





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MaryJane Mathews Dallas

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Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

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.

The Itemizer-Observer does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to respond. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the

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subject, not the author.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the I-O's website. 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 organizations, and must be original submissions to the I-O, not copies of letters sent to other media. Letters of thanks to busi-

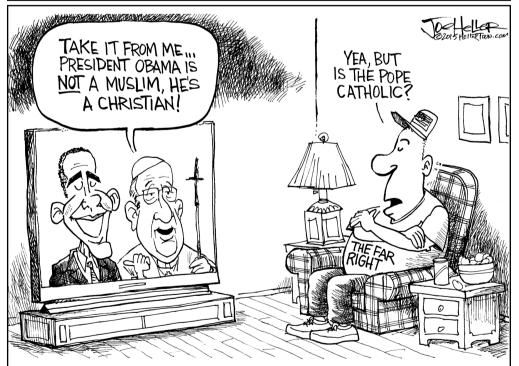
nesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names. The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Let-

ters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline. Reach us at:

Mail: Editor, Polk County Itemizer-Observer, P.O. Box 108, Dallas, OR 97338. Fax: 503-623-2395.

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