

How?: A new occasional feature

BY MARK BOGART

For the Baker City Herald

Sex education, literature, grammar, algebra, phonics, evolution, climate change, art, history, civil rights — each of these parts of school curriculum, and many others, have, at times, brought controversy to American classrooms.

The current debate over critical race theory (CRT) is only the most recent in a long line of topics that have resulted in angry letters, vocal outbursts in school board meetings, protests and, in some cases, threats to school officials.

What is curriculum and how is it established and implemented in our schools?

Greg Mitchell, Baker School District 5J director of federal programs and curriculum, describes curriculum as a set of “content standards” or “instructional outcomes.” The Oregon Department of Education, which sets those standards, defines them as “...what students should know and be able to do within content areas at specific stages in their education.”

There are hundreds of content standards adopted for Oregon schools. Here are two examples of standards adopted for sixth grade language arts:

- Analyze what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially; cite textual evidence to support the analysis.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Where do the standards come from?

The Oregon State Board of Education adopts standards for various subject areas. School districts then adopt their curriculum in compliance with the state standards. Although the local Board of Education must adopt the curriculum, there is usually very little change at the district level because of the large number of standards already required by the state.

For math and English language arts, Oregon and most

New Herald Feature to Focus on How Things Work

How do grocery stores keep such a wide variety of products on their shelves (or not)? How do schools select the curricula and textbooks used in local classrooms? How are votes counted in Baker County elections?

The Baker City Herald has given me the opportunity to explore a unique approach in writing a column to answer questions like those above. My submissions will center around the question, “How?”

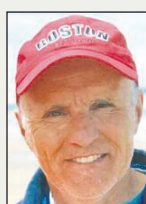
That’s how, not how to, so you won’t read about how to make a better burger or how to clear your computer’s browser. You will find out how all kinds of things work. The column will include topics ranging from science to public services and from sports and entertainment to those random head-scratchers that you never have time to look up. You might also find some answers to the questions who, what, when, where and why, but they’ll be the supporting cast, with how in the lead role.

Make no mistake. I don’t pretend to be an expert on the wide range of topics I’ll cover. My goal will be to learn a lot through interviews and research, and then to share that information with you. Some topics will be painfully serious (how children are placed in foster care) and some much lighter (how language changes in our media-driven world). But the goal will always be to share information that is relevant to local readers, accurate, and enlightening.

Please watch for the column in the weeks ahead and join me as I look for answers to the “How?” questions that are all around us.

About the writer:

After graduating from Baker High School, I attended Eastern Oregon University then earned my bachelor’s and master’s degrees in secondary education from Western Oregon University. While in college, I took journalism classes and worked on the student newspapers at both schools. Later I completed my school administration program at the University of Oregon. I taught language arts and social studies at Baker Middle School then served as principal at Churchill, Haines, Keating, and North Baker schools. After retiring from Baker School District, I worked part time at the YMCA and at MayDay and wrote news and feature stories for the Record Courier and the Baker City Herald.



Bogart

other states use the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in order to promote consistency throughout most of the country’s school districts. They were developed through a process involving educators and leaders from over 40 states with a goal of better preparing students for careers and college, and to compete with high performing schools in other countries.

Other content areas are developed mostly at the state level by teams of educators with background in the relevant subject areas. The state legislature has also established some requirements through state statute.

This leads us to a pair of the opposing forces pulling at curriculum: universal standards versus local control. While local control has the appeal of reflecting local values and culture, the trend in education has been in the other direction through most of our nation’s history.

The standards encourage consistency so that a child who moves from Baker to Salem, for example, is more likely to get a similar education. If every school taught its own curriculum, students who move might face excessive repetition of some content while missing out entirely on other elements.

In more recent years, accountability became a driving force. The public wanted schools, and teachers, to be accountable for covering the standards, especially as state and federal money was being used to improve results. A core curriculum, along with increased testing, was established as a tool for making schools accountable for children’s progress. With standard assessments, school funding could also be more easily tied to performance. Oregon also began issuing report cards for schools (based on assessments) so the public could, theoretically, see which schools achieve better results.

Mitchell sees more local control in the selection of “power standards” for emphasis in local schools. In addition to this process, groups called Professional Learning Communities focus on teaching and ongoing (formative) assessment methods in District 5J schools. The selection of textbooks and other instructional materials also allows local involvement by teachers and the public, although materials are first evaluated at the state level for their alignment with the state standards.

When asked about the biggest challenges in the curriculum arena today, Mitchell focused on politics and communication. He said that “conversation about education is a good thing,” but the conversations are becoming “less tactful.”

In today’s polarized political climate, there isn’t a willingness to “communicate with positive intentions,” he explained. This is especially true in social media, he added, because, “People can say whatever they want.”

As a principal he saw “a huge uproar” over health curriculum, and in his new position he’s fielded emotional calls about critical race theory, which he says is not being taught here. He’s concerned because he believes, “Kids need to be engaged in their education and see other points of view.”

Lawmakers propose \$400M for housing and homelessness

BY SARA CLINE

Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND — Lawmakers in Oregon’s Legislature on Thursday, Feb. 24, proposed a \$400 million package to urgently address affordable housing and homelessness in a state that has one of the highest rates of unhoused people in the country.

A 2020 federal review found that 35 people in Oregon are experiencing homelessness per 10,000. Only three states had a higher rate: New York (47 people per 10,000), Hawaii (46 people per 10,000) and California (41 people per 10,000).

The plan from majority Democrats, which is being offered during Oregon’s current short legislative session, would allocate \$165 million to address immediate homelessness needs statewide — including increasing shelter capacity and outreach to the vulnerable population — \$215 million to build and preserve affordable housing and \$20 million to support home ownership.

“We have heard from Oregonians that they want to see action to address homelessness and housing affordability and solutions that work,” House Majority Leader Julie Fahey said.

With the proposed package, officials are hoping to not only provide relief to people currently experiencing homelessness, but to also address some of the root causes.

As part of the \$165 million in homelessness spending, \$50 million would be allocated to Project Turnkey, which buys and repurposes hotels and other buildings to convert into shelter.

In addition \$80 million would be used for immediate statewide needs, such

as rapid rehousing, and \$25 million would go to local governments to respond to the specific needs in their communities — including shelter, outreach, hygiene and clean-ups.

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is leading a lobbying effort to pressure the state to immediately fund temporary homeless shelters.

Currently, Multnomah County, which includes Portland, has the capacity to shelter roughly 1,400 to 1,500 people year-round. There were about 4,000 people experiencing homelessness in Multnomah County in 2019, the last time there was a finalized count of the area’s homeless population — although local advocates predict that the homeless population has increased significantly since then.

Wheeler has blamed the lack of beds on state leaders, who he said have underinvested in temporary shelters compared with neighboring states.

“We need the state government to step up and match the funding levels to expand temporary shelter space now and save lives,” Wheeler said. “This is an Oregon issue, not just a Portland issue.”

Rep. David Gomberg, a Democrat representing Oregon’s Central Coast, said: “Our rural and coastal communities suffer the highest child homelessness in the state.”

One of the root causes that advocates in Oregon say leads to homelessness is a lack of affordable housing, an issue that the state has long faced but has been exacerbated during the pandemic.

According to a study published by the state, Oregon must build more than 140,000 affordable homes over the next 20 years and not lose any existing homes.

Center

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The Interpretive Center, which has been closed since November 2020 due to the pandemic — work started in October 2021 to remove exhibits and other items in preparation for the project — will remain closed during the remodeling.

The work is slated to be finished in the spring of 2023, but the Center will stay closed for several more months while exhibits and fixtures are reinstalled.

That’s a shorter duration than BLM originally expected, said Larisa Bogardus, public affairs officer for the BLM’s Vale District.

Initially the agency expected the remodeling would take more than 2 years.

The impetus for the project was a nationwide survey comparing the energy efficiency of BLM buildings, Bogardus said in 2021.

That survey, which included an inspection of the Interpretive Center in May 2018, earned the Center the “dubious distinction” of being the agency’s least efficient building, Bogardus said.

Among the findings is that the Center’s “Energy Use Intensity” — a measure of its inefficiency — was 170 kilo-British Thermal Units per square foot. The average for BLM facilities is 84, according to the survey.

The Center when operating had a monthly power bill aver-



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald, File

The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center has had more than 2 million visitors since it opened May 23, 1992.

More About The Center

The Oregon Trail Interpretive Center has been one of Baker County’s top tourist attractions since it opened during Memorial Day weekend in 1992.

The Center was especially popular during its first six years; its annual attendance hasn’t reached 100,000 since 1997.

After welcoming 201,545 people in 1992 (despite being open for slightly more than seven months), the Center has its biggest year in 1993, with 347,981 visitors. That surge was no coincidence, as 1993 was the 150th anniversary of the first large migration on the Oregon Trail.

There were multiple special events in Baker County that year, including the annual convention for the Oregon-California Trails Association. Attendance dipped to 197,307 in 1994, and to 170,405 and 140,281 the next two years.

Annual visitor numbers haven’t fluctuated as much in the past dozen years, ranging between 60,231 in 2010 and 32,764 in 2013.

The yearly average between 2008-19 was 43,745.

aging about \$10,000.

The remodel is estimated to reduce the Center’s energy use by 73%, according to a press release from the Vale District.

“We want to be good stewards of our natural resources,” said Vale District Manager Wayne Monger, whose office oversees the center. “This design utilizes high thermal insulation value materials and high efficiency

heating and cooling technology to counter summer and winter energy demands of the site.”

Approximately 16% of the project is funded through the Great American Outdoors Act, which allocates up to \$1.9 billion annually for maintenance and improvements to critical facilities and infrastructure in national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, recre-

ation areas and Tribal schools.

During the extended closure, a new exhibit at the Baker Heritage Museum in Baker City, scheduled to open in May 2022, will serve as an Oregon Trail Experience, with BLM park rangers on site to provide interpretive programs.

A series of living history demonstrations and other events will take place across Grove Street from the Heritage Museum at Geiser-Pollman Park.

“We recognize the important role the center plays in telling the history of Eastern Oregon and the settlement of the Pacific Northwest,” Monger said.

Although the Center itself will remain closed, the access road will be open to allow visitors to get to the network of paved and unpaved trails on Flagstaff Hill, which lead to Oregon Trail ruins.

For more information and to learn more about the Oregon Trail, visit oregontrail.blm.gov or call 541-523-1843.

Billie Rae Bigley

April 28, 1929 – February 19, 2022

Billie Rae Bigley passed into the arms of her Savior, Jesus Christ, in the early morning hours of February 19, 2022, due to dementia complicated by kidney failure.

Billie was born on April 28, 1929, to Raymond and Hazel Sievers in Blackfoot, Idaho, the third of five children. Billie and her family moved to Baker in 1940 and she subsequently met and married her husband of 56 years, William Clive Bigley. Bill and Billie raised six kids, three boys and three girls, and were together until Bill’s passing in 2002. Their home was always a welcoming place for family and friends, stop by for a minute or stay for days - both options were available.

Billie was preceded in death by her husband, her siblings and three of her children and more friends than you can shake a stick at. Billie is survived by her son, Clyde Bigley, daughters, Bunny Bigley and Beth (David) Yeaton and grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren too numerous to list. Mom had a full and blessed life and in lieu of flowers or donations mom would appreciate you go tell someone you love them.



Norma Fay Goertzen

February 13, 1934 - February 13, 2022

Norma Fay Goertzen, 88, of Baker City, OR died February 13, 2022, at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center with family at her side.

Norma was born February 13, 1934, in Medford, OR. She was raised mostly in Butte Falls, OR with some time spent in San Francisco, CA during WWII. She also lived in Dominion City and Altona MB, Canada.

Norma met John Goertzen on July 9, 1961, in Vancouver, B.C., on the last day of a Bible convention. Norma and her sister boarded a bus where John and his brother struck up a conversation. John got Norma’s address and wrote to her for a year. They were married on August 23, 1962, at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Gold Hill, OR and the rest is history.

Norma loved to draw and paint, especially horses. She enjoyed working on crossword puzzles, reading, writing and receiving letters from friends and family. Her special pet was her first dog, Captain Jenks. Norma’s favorite color was blue and she adored calypso orchids.

Memorable dates in her life included her Baptism as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses April 16, 1960, her marriage and the births of her 4 children.

Norma loved to give gifts, especially if she learned someone really wanted or needed something specific. She was a kind and thoughtful person who had a wonderful sense of humor.

Norma had a deep love for her Heavenly Father, Jehovah and His word the Bible. She enjoyed sharing her faith with others, especially the hope of a resurrection to a paradise earth.

She was preceded in death by her husband, John Goertzen; parents, Francis and Essie Poole; son-in-law, Alexander Robertson; siblings, Elizabeth Albert, Audrey Mitchell, Glenna Albert, Francis Poole Jr, Priscilla Hedgpath and Dale Poole.

Norma is survived by her daughters, Sara Kristine Goertzen of Baker City, Geneva Gaye (Rod) Easttum of Clarkston, WA, Tracy Dawn Robertson of Altona, MB; son, Jared Zane (Jani) Goertzen of Baker City, OR; 7 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

For those who would like to make a memorial donation in honor of Norma the family suggests Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses through Tami’s Pine Valley Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, Oregon, 97834. Online condolences can be shared at www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com



COME MEET DAN!

Please join us for a Meet & Greet
Thursday March 3, 2022
6:30 p.m.- Event Center
Baker County Fairgrounds



Email: dangarrickjr@msn.com
Phone or Text: 541-519-6462
Website: dg4commissioner.com

During this informational evening you will hear from Dan and also have the opportunity to ask questions and support him throughout his campaign. If you are unable to make this event, you may support Dan now!