



- lisa nuss

June 23, 2015

Written Testimony to the Senate Rules Committee June 23, 2015

Urging a NO VOTE for SALAM NOOR

To the Rules Committee –

I am a Salem parent. I speak today for more than 40 Oregon families around the state who have signed this [petition](#) to reject Salam Noor and other officials who have threatened legal action against parents who call attention to the problems in Oregon schools. 20 of those parents have posted reasons for signing the petition – like these:

- [Curt McConnell](#) HILLSBORO, OR
  - 
  - We don't need the gestapo in schools, we need people who will work with parents.

[Britanie Rains](#) KLAMATH FALLS, OR

I also encountered issues with the principal of Clearlake elementary, also in Keizer. I have removed my three children from public schools and I am now homeschooling.

[Miranda Smith](#) SALEM, OR

We live mere steps away from Morningside Elementary, but I refuse to enroll my children there under any circumstances based on the many horror stories I've heard from parents and students. No child should have to attend a school operated in this manner. Shame on Salem-Keizer for allowing this nonsense.

[lindsey spencer](#) SALEM, OR

This is abuse and harassment followed up by neglect to take corrective action.

[David Smith](#) HARRISBURG, OR

If what is happening at Morningside Elementary is ANY indication of how our schools are being run, or even if it is the only one , I feel compelled to sign this petition. I would be shirking my duty as a parent, nay as a human being if I did not !

[Lisa Ryan](#) SALEM, OR

This practice is unacceptable! Institutionalized public systems should be setting a much better example and far more progressive standards for behaviour and problem solving.

[Nicole Mason](#) SALEM, OR

I have friends with children in the Salem-Keizer School District and it is a deplorable place. I have been told about teachers bullying students, substitute teachers physically threatening students, middle school students being wrestled to the ground by security personal and shamed for learning disabilities. Oregon has decided that it's public schools in poor areas must be mini prisons, since that's where the kids are going anyways, right? Shame on this school district!

[Barbara Morgan](#) PORTLAND, OR

It's time to make Superintendent of Public Instruction an elected post again and get AWAY from appointees like Rudy Crew and Salam Noor.

The text of my testimony follows, also posted on

<https://www.change.org/p/oregon-governor-reject-salam-noor-and-other-school-officials-who-threaten-families-who-tell-the-truth-about-oregon-schools> –

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[Petitioning Oregon Governor](#)

## **Reject Salam Noor and other school officials who threaten families who tell the truth about Oregon schools.**



[lisa nuss](#) United States



Tell Gov. Brown to Reject Salam Noor:

Say No to School Officials Shaming Students and Sending Police to Parents' Doors

OregonPEN Editorial, by Lisa Nuss

The public was up in arms last winter when a grandparent took an iPhone picture of the isolation table at a Grants Pass Elementary School. There is also an isolation table at my First Grader's school, Morningside Elementary in Salem. I tried to take a picture of it and Salam Noor, then-Deputy Superintendent of the Salem-Keizer School District, sent a policeman to my door at 7:15 the next morning threatening to have me arrested.

Now Governor Brown has nominated Mr. Noor to be Superintendent of all of the public schools in Oregon. Is this what we want for Oregon schools?

The isolation tables are just one small example of the impulse that has taken hold in Oregon schools to publicly shame children. And since Oregon routinely ranks near the bottom in the nation for the quality of its education, the shaming doesn't appear to achieve any goal other than to harm the children involved.

The isolation table in Grants Pass was intended to shame the child for repeatedly being tardy. If an elementary school kid is tardy, that's the parents' problem – who would think to punish the child? At Morningside Elementary in Salem, as I leave the school after

dropping off my son, I see the same ragtag groups of kids come in late every day; I see their parents screeching their cars up to the door, shoving the kids out of the car, making them go in alone to face the music when it's the parents' fault when little kids are late.

One day I brought my son in late and as I walked past the office, I heard a snarl that stopped me. The head of the office staff barked out the office into the hallway in her best trailer trash imitation, "I see you [name!] Don't think you can hide from me! GET IN HERE and get your tardy slip!" One by one she shamed those kids whose parents always bring them late, and yelled at them in a tone that made me want to call Child Protective Services.

At Morningside Elementary in Salem, a hostile anti-social woman polices the lunchroom and threatens to send any kid who looks at her the wrong way to the isolation table. She has no teaching license, no education experience – yet she is allowed to patrol the lunchroom like a police warden – looking for trouble.

One Dad told me the way they run the school reminds him of the army. Another Dad told me that Morningside reminded him of being in jail (I assumed he was in a position to know.) Yet another Dad, who didn't speak much English, told me our children's Kindergarten teacher, Ms. Rieger, is "bad for children." A mom who has had many kids in the school and was head of the PTA, told me that she has seen good and bad teachers, but Ms. Rieger was the worst she'd ever seen, and should not be teaching kindergarteners. That Mom agreed to sign a complaint with me, and then changed her mind, for fear of retaliation.

My son, a First Grader who his teacher says is a "leader in the class" and well-liked among students, tried to help a disabled girl in his class one day at lunch. She is an adorable girl who happens to be a "little person" and has trouble walking. My son got up to get this girl a spoon, without permission from the warden, and the warden ordered him to the isolation table. My son told me, "She yelled at me and told me to get my things, go sit at the isolation table, and not to speak or look at anyone for the rest of lunch."

One boy in my son's First Grade class became so anxious because of the mean lunch room monitors that he was throwing up. He asked to go home and the office staff told him he was faking it and refused to call his family. Their son stopped going to school because he hated it so much and the principal sent a letter threatening legal action against them.

Another boy in my son's class was so upset at the way they treat kids that he threw a chair and was suspended from school. This is a good kid, from one of the families who volunteers in schools the most. The Mom is a crossing guard and they have four kids who are active in the school community.

While the kids line up for lunch, they are forbidden to talk to each other. I have gone to have lunch with my son and watched first graders made to stand five minutes in line and scolded at for even whispering to another student. Try standing for five full minutes

sometime next to two other people without looking or talking to them -- and then imagine a six year-old being expected to do that every day, all day, from 9-3. The students in my son's first grade class were forbidden from talking to or even greeting each other in the morning before the bell rang. I am one of the few parents to know this happens because I ignored the letter the principal, Bonney Dietrich, sent to all parents asking them please not to come into the school anymore with their children.

The children are told they cannot talk to other children until recess, which is 15 minutes long. And yet, recess is routinely withheld -- the chance for six year olds to play is constantly dangled over their head as punishment. In my son's Kindergarten class, recess was withheld from the whole class if even one student didn't finish his work.

Then there is what my son calls the "recess police" who blow the whistle at the end of recess and scold children who don't stand perfectly quiet in perfectly straight lines before they can walk back into the building. The recess police then allow the children to go back into the building, in the order of which class stood the most correctly and quietly. My son stepped out of line one day and he had to go stand against the wall and then lose half of his recess the next day, by sitting at the "shame steps" next to the isolation table in the cafeteria. At an all-school assembly, the Morningside Elementary School Principal called out a special award to the student who was "The Most Quiet at Recess."

If they treat six year-olds this way, is it any wonder they feel comfortable sending police officers to parents' doors?

I tried to complain to the school district about the many abusive actions going on in my son's school. There was the orchestra teacher who shoved an eight year-old – in front of other staff; he grabbed her from behind by her shoulders and shoved her, after he chased her down the hall when she ran from his class scared of him, and ran crying to the office. After this, the principal, Bonney Dietrich, refused to do anything about it. The principal told the family the girl was "fine." One of the adult witnesses to the shoving contacted the parents and told them the girl wasn't fine and told the parents they had a right to demand something be done. Only when the parents went over the principal's head did the incident get reported, after which the orchestra teacher was suspended and then fired. If the principal had had her way, that teacher would still be at the school, in control of our children.

After this incident, the principal retaliated against the reporting family by sending the same police officer they sent to my door, to their older son's class in middle school. The principal sent an email directing the police officer to take this family's older son out of his class at middle school, and tell him the principal was banning him from the grounds of the grade school because some older kids told them he was causing trouble.

The principal did not talk to the family or attempt to investigate the incident at all; based on a story told to her by a few middle school kids, she sent a police officer to scare this 7th grader in front of all of his friends, to get back at this family who had just gone over

her head about the orchestra teacher.

The middle school kids congregate around the grade school in the afternoons, waiting to walk their little brothers and sisters home. from grade school. I know this boy and he is a gentle soul - he was the victim of some bullies, who know how to manipulate a vindictive principal. Who bans a 7th grader from the local grade school grounds? Who sends a policeman to drag a 7th grader out of his classroom? Who does this without first talking to the parents, and getting the whole story?

Principals in the Salem-Keizer School District, that's who. I intervened on behalf of the family, asking the policeman what grounds he had to ban this boy from the neighborhood school and park where all the kids gather after school. The police officer told me the Morningside Principal sent him an email ordering him to do it. I finally convinced the police officer they were going to have legal trouble if they didn't make this right and with no further explanation, the police officer called the family and told them the principal had changed her mind.

And then I learned personally how retaliation works in the Salem-Keizer School District. Several teachers at the school told me they would like to help, but they feared retaliation as well.

Last year, after the library instructor (who is the very same lunchroom warden) did something that even the principal agreed was wrong, the library instructor retaliated against my kindergartener by jabbing her finger in his face, in front me me, and barking, "DON'T YOU EVER TELL YOUR PARENTS AGAIN ABOUT WHAT GOES ON IN THIS LIBRARY." Let me repeat – she did this in front of me, to a five year-old.

This was not too long after the day, a regular school day, when I walked my son into the building and a staff person stopped us and said, "We are not supervising children today." "But the bell rang," I said, "You are a public school – your job is to watch the children." I told the staffer I had to get to work and she said, "That's your problem, isn't it?"

That's when I called the School Board. I'm pretty certain that we don't want Oregon public school staff threatening kids if they tell their parents about what goes on in school. One of the School Board members in Salem, Chris Brantley, who taught at Sprague High School when I was student body president, suggested I put my complaints in writing. My complaints were all centered around the fact that the school was in bad need of mentoring for its staff and principal. I thought for sure someone at the School District would be appalled that the principal ran around threatening to ban mine and other families from the school. How naive I was. I talked on the phone and then sent my written complaint directly to Salam Noor - who was in charge of supervising grade schools while Salem-Keizer was between superintendents. The deadline for the school district to respond, according to their own timeline, came and went with no response. I faxed a reminder to Noor that the deadline had passed - no response. Finally I called the Oregon State Dept of

Education- The ODE called Noor, then ODE called me back and said Noor assured them he had resolved all of my issues and that I had withdrawn my complaint. All of that was a lie.

Over the summer I made general inquiries at the school district about homeschooling - nothing specific, just questions like, "If I homeschool, can my son still be involved in music & PE?" I went ahead and enrolled my son in first grade as a back-up plan. I decided to try staying there for First Grade because after the class rosters were posted on the front of the school door, my son had been assigned to a great teacher. As I walked into the school with my son on his first day of first grade, the principal barred the door, pointed at my son and yelled, "You can't be here! YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BE HERE! YOU SAID YOU ARE HOMESCHOOLING!" and she tried to physically block me from entering the building, I told her he was enrolled in the school, as evidenced by the roster posted right next to her on the front window of the building, and she had no right to ban a local enrolled child from public school. The police officer --(local Salem police assigned to the school) she sent to my door told me the principal had every right to ban me and my son from the building because she felt I was a threat to the safety of the school. Then I complained again to the school district about a principal banning an enrolled child from the school. Salam Noor first denied that the principal did it, then said she did it because I had registered as a homeschooler. When I told Noor I had the roster in my hand showing my son registered at the public school he then changed his story again and told me the principal had every right to bar me from the school because she feared for the school's safety.

When I went to a meeting a few days later, Noor went on a ranting rampage about how "everyone at the school" says I am creating a problem and I better watch it or there will be further legal action. Of course, the school district doesn't allow tape recording of the meeting (I asked) but I did bring a witness. I told Noor that by "creating a problem" he was referring to telling the truth about what was going on in the school and I was pretty sure that as a taxpayer I have a right to tell the truth about what's going on in our public schools.

Noor followed up with a letter formally threatening legal action against me if I said or did anything else to "harass the staff." I should mention about the day they "disappeared" my son from his class and grilled my son about his home life. Lucky for me we have a very stable family or if they'd unearthed anything I'm certain they would have used it against me. This happened last spring after I called the Dept of Education and the District decided they would have to respond to my written complaints. On the day my son came home and told me the counselor had talked to him about our family, for the first and only time in two years, I marched into the office, very angry, and said, "Who talked to my son without my permission!" I was mad - stinking mad - they had ignored me for nearly a year, ignored my written complaint, and then were low enough to use a child in their war.

The school counselor told me she was simply "randomly" selecting students in the class to discuss how things were going. I asked her, "How many other children in the class of

25 did you "randomly" talk to today?" She said, "It was just Spencer today. He just happened to be the first. I will get around to the others later."

Noor told me all of my complaints were useless because I didn't have any witnesses. I then emailed him the names and phone numbers of three witnesses and each confirmed Noor never contacted them. It was then that I tried to bring in my iphone to document the isolation table and the snarling, and when I found a policeman banging at my door at 7:00 a.m.

Salam Noor scared me into silence with his threats. I kept my son in school from September through April, and never said a word about anything because I was afraid he would make good on his threat to have me arrested or ban me from my son's school. After my son was sick for a week in April and the principal sent me a letter accusing me of faking my son's illness and she declared – in writing – that if my son missed one more day without a permission slip from a pediatrician, she would take legal action against me.

That was the last straw. I withdrew my son from public school the next day.

A Portland lawyer who specializes in lawsuits against schools and universities, has confirmed these actions by Salam Noor, the principal and the district are illegal. This lawyer said Noor's actions are "not right, moral, or legal." He has no right to threaten to ban parents from their child's schools for no reason and threaten legal action for trespass with no evidence of any kind of threat and no right to threaten legal action for using a camera phone in a public school.

This attorney said there is the "legal reality" v. practical reality" - the school districts can "get away" with a lot, unless you have the resources to contest them. The attorney said the tactic of taking a child of a complaining parent out of class and trying to uncover problems in their home life is a common tactic in Oregon public schools. "If they'd found anything," the attorney said, "They would have reported you to CPS."

And yet Noor has risen through the Oregon schools administrative labyrinth and Gov. Brown has nominated him to lead all of Oregon's public schools. I know Gov Brown to be an extremely fair and ethical person, so I am certain that Noor has managed to hide these illegal and immoral actions against children and families from her. But what does that say about the state of Oregon public schools?

The book *Silent no More: Voices of Courage in American Schools* tells heartbreaking stories of school districts across the country who are sending police to the doors of teachers who speak truthfully about mistakes and flaws in the ridiculous tests they are required to administer. School administrators feel free to revoke or threaten to revoke the licenses from teachers who try to tell the truth.



Who benefits from this punitive Gestapo strategy? Administrators riding high on fat salaries who reign with impunity, suffering no quality control, supervision, or consequences for their actions, spending taxpayer dollars on legal teams to protect them. In Noor's case, his wife works for the law firm that defends the Salem-Keizer School District. Oregon is now starting to sound like the corruptive environments we expect from New Jersey or Chicago.

Who else benefits from this punishing environment for children? Bad teachers who are maladjusted and have an unhealthy need to control and dominate people smaller than them.

Who loses? The good teachers who care about teaching, and the children.

These shameful tactics have no place in Oregon. Tell Gov. Brown to withdraw Noor's nomination and ban him from Oregon schools forever.

Posted by Lisa Nuss

I am an Oregon native and a former Legislative Counsel drafter in the Oregon Legislature.

My political opinion columns have been published in the Huffington Post, the London Guardian and the San Francisco Chronicle. My work has been used as curriculum in university courses, referenced in books, and used in a seminar by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Join the conversation at [SaveOurKidsFromOregonSchools.com](http://SaveOurKidsFromOregonSchools.com), on Word Press, see my posts at [www.How-Dare-She.com](http://www.How-Dare-She.com).

Email me at [LisaNuss@msn.com](mailto:LisaNuss@msn.com)

1. 4 hours ago

**25 supporters**

2. 17 hours ago

**lisa nuss started this petition**

## Reasons for signing

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- [Shyanna Hess](#) SALEM, OR
  - 4 minutes ago
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- I have two small children and I won't be able to homeschool when they are of age, I want our public education to be the best it can be!
- 
- [Curt McConnell](#) HILLSBORO, OR
  - 5 minutes ago
- We don't need the gestapo in schools, we need people who will work with parents.
- [colby olsen](#) WHITE CITY, OR

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- Children are not toys to be manipulated for political ideology. This is blatant indoctrination of our youth. It has to end
- [Britanie Rains](#) KLAMATH FALLS, OR
  - about 4 hours ago
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- I also encountered issues with the principal of Clearlake elementary, also in Keizer. I have removed my three children from public schools and I am now homeschooling.
- [lindsey spencer](#) SALEM, OR
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- This is abuse and harassment followed up by neglect to take corrective action.
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  - about 5 hours ago
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- [tiffany martin](#) PHOENIX, AZ
  - about 5 hours ago
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- My friend lives in salem and will be homeschooling because of problems like this.
- [Monica Mesa](#) PORTLAND, OR
  - about 5 hours ago
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- I am signing because this is wrong. Who do they think they are to first make it feel like jail to these little kids. Then threaten their parents for their kid being sick, or home school, ect.... Who are they to think they have a right to do that. This touches home because my best friend just had something similar happen with the Crossler middle school principal. This stuff needs to change. Oh and the shame table! Yes let's shame our kids because life isn't hard enough let's have them get this feeling early on so they feel bad about themselves :(
- [Miranda Smith](#) SALEM, OR
  - about 14 hours ago
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- [Lisa Ryan](#) SALEM, OR
  - about 16 hours ago
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  - about 16 hours ago
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  - about 16 hours ago
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