

more than 30 years, their earnings are slipping. What they count as far back as 2007, was that low socio-economic status first grade students actually learned slightly more from September to June than did students of higher socio-economic status. Learning gaps arose during the summer when students were not even in school. The wealthier students enjoyed continued learning opportunities — camps, zoos, technology, etc. — while the needier did not. The researchers followed students over the years and found the learning gaps were cumulative through the ninth grade.

One should be able to assume the advantages provided in more affluent homes are not limited to the summer. The same conditions exist for needy children throughout the year. Now, if school actually provides an advantage to needier students and summer vacations cause significant regression, what is the answer? The simple answer would seem to be more school — extended school years for our neediest students. And we are not suggesting drill and kill summer school days. Summer school for needy children should include the same type of experiences enjoyed by more affluent students — computers, visits to zoos and museums, art and music, swimming and sports.

It is time to stop demoralizing our educators by blaming them for learning gaps. It is time to stop destroying the public's confidence in our schools as we have done by saying our schools are failing. No Child Left Behind was wrong in blaming schools for learning gaps. Einstein's definition of insanity — doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result — applies here. Twenty years of doing the same thing and spending billions of dollars while getting no positive outcomes should be enough to figure out something is not working.

Reduce the learning gaps by reducing the regression that occurs during the summer for needy students. Provide them with summer learning opportunities.

Joseph H. Crowley is past president of the Rhode Island Association of School Principals and the coauthor, with Albert Colella, of "Poverty & Despair vs. Education & Opportunity."

GRANLUND'S VIEW/DAVE GRANLUND



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marijuana, reap the revenue

To argue that marijuana should not be legalized to raise revenue because it is a "vice" is hypocritical and senseless.

To invoke "morality" as a reason to oppose legalizing marijuana ignores the immorality of the war on drugs and the damage it has caused in our state. It's also an inconsistent and hypocritical argument, considering that the state already collects significant revenue from gambling.

Balloons are a danger to wildlife

While reading your article about grieving during COVID-19, Deanna Upchurch, of the HopeHealth grief and hospice center, suggested going old school by releasing balloons, as an example ("For the grieving, a surreal limbo," News, May 27).

Please remind your readers that balloon releases harm wildlife and add to

On behalf of the American Legion Riverside Post 10, I would like to thank East Providence Mayor Bob DaSilva and the numerous departments who helped to organize, provide safety and participate in the Memorial Day parade.

Also, a big thank you to all the groups who participated. This was a unique and "Townie" way to honor our brave men and women who have passed!

Michael Reed, East Providence

OUR TURN

Solitary confinement has human and economic costs

in isolation and to their families and loved ones. It is also incredibly costly: Rhode Island taxpayers spend \$15 million a year, or \$200,000 per prisoner, to house 85 to 90 detainees in the High Security Center, a "supermax" facility where most prisoners are held in solitary. In this year's state budget, the corrections department requested an additional \$60 million for facility repairs and upkeep. In comparison, it costs \$82,000 per year per prisoner in Maximum Security and \$63,000 in Medium Security.

Corrections Director Patricia Coyne-Fague told state lawmakers in March 2019 about some of the issues with the High Security Center and with long-term solitary confinement: "As corrections has evolved, we know that keeping people in cells 23 hours a day is not really the way to go. So today's philosophy in mind. There's very little programming space, which we know is necessary, and the design of the facility itself is poor."

Corrections officials often claim that solitary confinement is a necessary tool to maintain order and prevent violence. However, research has not found the use of solitary to prevent misconduct. In fact, when Colorado, Maine and Mississippi reduced their reliance on solitary confinement, their facilities became safer

for staff and prisoners alike. There is ample evidence that solitary confinement harms the mental and physical health of those subjected to it, and is associated with a substantially increased risk of death after release from prison.

Illinois closed its supermax facility in 2012, saving millions of dollars without sacrificing safety. Several states have eliminated or greatly reduced the use of solitary confinement altogether with similar outcomes. Rick Raemish, executive director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, said that solitary confinement "was not corrective at all. It was indiscriminate punishment that too often amounted to torture and did not make anyone safer. The practice was pervasive because it was considered reasonable and effective. It was neither."

If Rhode Island truly wants to divorce itself from the practice of solitary confinement, the state must close High Security, saving millions of dollars and moving toward a more humane, safe and effective prison system.

Jennifer Wood is executive director of the Rhode Island Center for Justice. Mike King is assistant professor of criminal justice at Bridgewater State University. Jesse Duarte is an attorney with Duarte Law Firm LLC.

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