

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Does Kansas have qualified teachers?

The Topeka Capital-Journal

There was some good news recently concerning education, although dished out with a helping of skepticism.

More and more school districts across the United States are increasing the number of highly qualified teachers for core classes such as math, history, language.

One-third of the states report that more than 90 percent of the teachers in their core classrooms are highly qualified. Kansas just missed that designation with an 89.3 percent. The national average is 91 percent, up from 86 percent the year before.

Kansas' 89.3 percent looks like a failing grade, though, because the surrounding states have percentages ranging between 97 and 99. Worse, the percentage in Kansas' poorer secondary schools is only 78 percent, compared with 89 percent to 99 percent in similar schools in the surrounding states. The national average for poorer secondary schools is 84 percent.

President Bush and Congress have promised that 100 percent of core classes will have highly qualified teachers by the end of the school year.

There is the possibility, though, that Kansas doesn't really lag that far behind its neighbors. It might be like the to-do in Topeka when a ranking a few years ago showed Topeka with the eighth-highest crime rate in the nation. A little investigation determined that Topeka was playing by the rules, but some other cities weren't when it came to accurately reporting crime statistics.

A number of people are questioning the state-reported numbers for the percentages of highly qualified teachers. For one thing, each state gets to define the term "highly qualified" in its own way.

The U.S. Education Department is checking into the accuracy of the numbers reported by the states. States will find out by May 15 where they stand and whether they will lose federal aid.

So, those looking for good news will have to be satisfied for now that things aren't as bad in Kansas classrooms as they used to be.

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An old story with a new twist

I ran across this story the other day and I couldn't help but offer it up as food for thought.

Remember "The Ant and the Grasshopper?"

I know there have been many versions circulating about the story of the ant and the grasshopper, but when I received this one a couple of years ago, it was too good to pass up then and I feel the same now.

Here it is:

OLD VERSION

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter.

The grasshopper thinks he's a fool and laughs and dances and plays the summer away. Come winter, the ant is warm and well fed. The grasshopper has no food or shelter, so he dies out in the cold.

MORAL OF THE STORY: Be responsible for yourself!

MODERN VERSION

The ant works hard in the withering heat all summer long, building his house and laying up supplies for the winter.

The grasshopper thinks he's a fool and laughs and dances and plays the summer away.

Come winter, the shivering grasshopper calls a press conference and demands to



Deep Thoughts

know why the ant should be allowed to be warm and well fed while others are cold and starving.

CBS, NBC, and ABC show up to provide pictures of the shivering grasshopper next to a video of the ant in his comfortable home with a table filled with food.

America is stunned by the sharp contrast. How can this be, that in a country of such wealth, this poor grasshopper is allowed to suffer so?

Kermit the Frog appears on Oprah with the grasshopper, and everybody cries when they sing, "It's Not Easy Being Green."

Jesse Jackson stages a demonstration in front of the ant's house where the news stations film the group singing, "We shall overcome."

Jesse then has the group kneel down to pray to God for the grasshopper's sake.

Tom Daschle and John Kerry exclaim in an interview with Peter Jennings that the ant has gotten rich off the back of the grasshop-

per, and both call for an immediate tax hike on the ant to make him pay his "fair share."

Finally, the EEOC drafts the "Economic Equity and Anti-Grasshopper Act," retroactive to the beginning of the summer. The ant is fined for failing to hire a proportionate number of green bugs and, having nothing left to pay his retroactive taxes, his home is confiscated by the government.

Hillary gets her old law firm to represent the grasshopper in a defamation suit against the ant, and the case is tried before a panel of federal judges that Bill appointed from a list of single-parent welfare recipients.

The ant loses the case. The story ends as we see the grasshopper finishing up the last bits of the ant's food while the government house he is in, which just happens to be the ant's old house, crumbles around him because he doesn't maintain it.

The ant has disappeared in the snow.

The grasshopper is found dead in a drug related incident and the house, now abandoned, is taken over by a gang of spiders who terrorize the once peaceful neighborhood.

MORAL OF THE STORY: Vote Republican

Have a great weekend!

Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press.

Your turn

Let's get on the bandwagon

Carolyn Armstrong, Colby City Manager

Marc Gilman, Director of Public Utilities

Most areas in northwest Kansas are struggling to maintain population.

Thomas County is the second largest of the 20 counties in northwest Kansas, and our citizens can help fight the battle of shrinking population.

The spirit which has made us a growing, caring community can continue if we will do our part!

Thomas County and the City of Colby are sponsoring a cleanup effort to improve the visual image we project throughout our County. Our image conveys a powerful message to prospective new residents and businesses, and reflects the type of people we are.

which no longer have a purpose, and pulling those weeds which detract from the beauty of our City.

Whenever possible, help neighbors who can't manage the entire cleanup for themselves.

Business owners can help by cleaning the alleyways behind your buildings as well as the areas easily visible to everyone.

We can all help by planting at least one tree. All trees planted on public grounds must be approved by the Tree Board, so should you choose to plant a tree in one of Colby's public areas, please submit the idea to a Tree Board member first.

Let's give Colby the best look ever.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nw kansas.com.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

