

Opinion

A Kansas Viewpoint



Good teachers will help the pendulum

From The Ottawa Herald
The state of education is in flux as educators are forced to teach tests. Those changes have produced some winners — namely girls, who have overtaken boys as the majority on college campuses. Just 30 years ago, male undergraduates were 58 percent of college's enrollment. Now they are 44 percent.

Such factors as the lack of adequate male role models, less academic success, a narrower view of what should count in rating achievement and girls' steady progress in academics, among others, may have contributed to this new mindset.

Fewer than 40 percent of boys live in a household with their biological dad as a role model reinforcing their need to focus on education.

The federally mandated No Child Left Behind program, however, leaves little latitude to discern a student's achievement level. It's all in the test scores in math, reading, writing and science. Other achievements, like sports, vocational education and other areas are less relevant than in the past.

In the past, girls were the ones who needed extra focus to raise their math and science acumen. Some now say it is the boys who are in need of a leg up.

Local educators say girls are improving their performance rather than boys declining. Plus more boys at the high school level are choosing the vocational route rather than college so they can begin their careers faster.

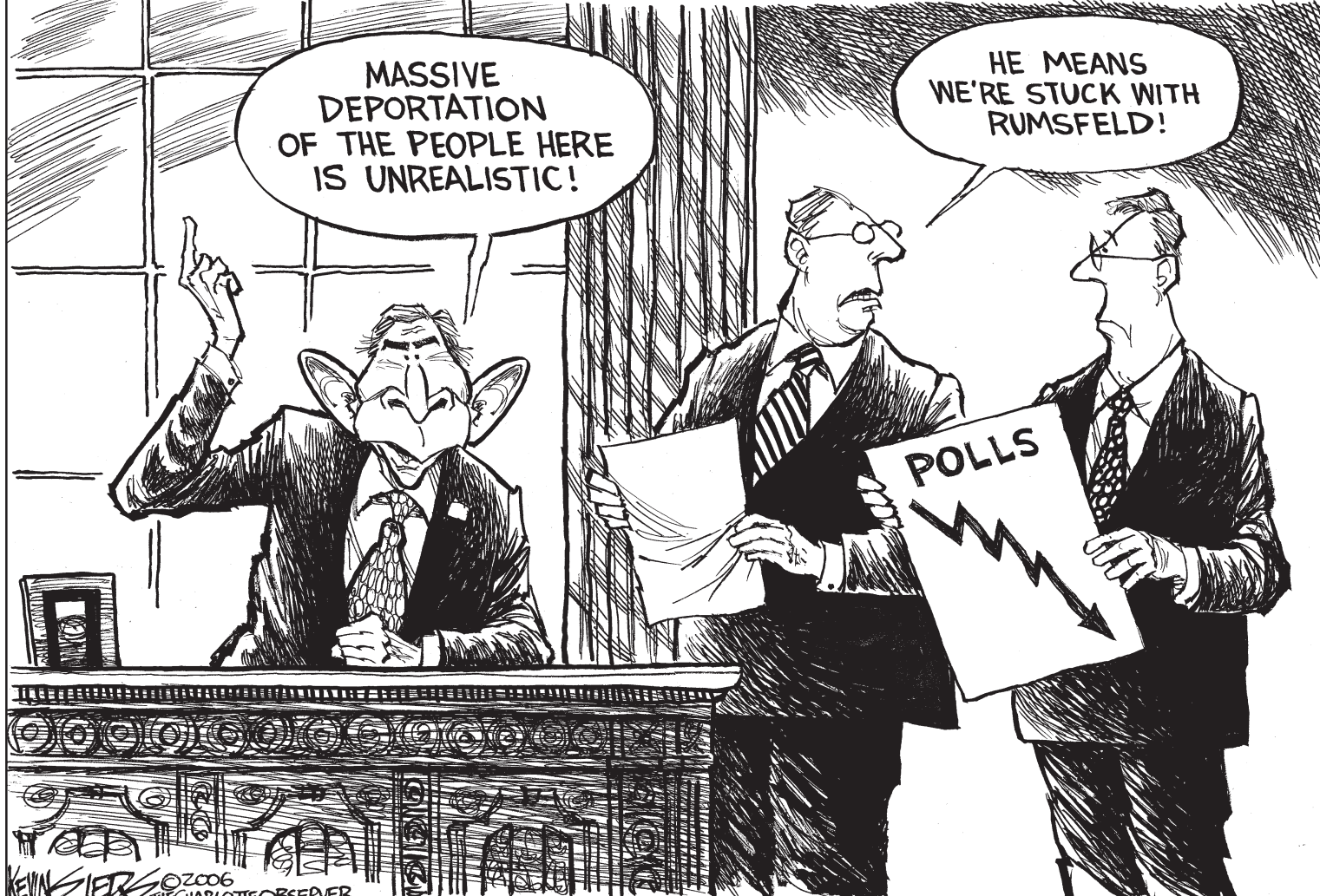
Some teachers are finding creative ways to reach both boys and girls with lessons, while others are encouraging schools to go to separate classrooms for each gender so lessons are customized to the manner in which that gender learns best.

Boys and girls have always been and will remain different. Good teachers will help the pendulum swing to middle ground that best suits both genders for equal success.

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@nwkansas.com.

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Maybe they'll listen now

"Outrage" is about the strongest word I can think of right now to apply to nearly \$3 a gallon gas.

I keep seeing red each time I go to the pump, and wonder why if so many people aren't happy about the price of getting around, why aren't they doing something about it?

Predictions are running rampant that gas will hit \$3 by summer. Well, it's nearly there here and is already over that amount elsewhere.

Members of Congress suggested a one-time rebate of \$100 for taxpayers to help pay for gas.

That didn't get very far.

However, I also hear they're gunning for the oil companies. They're asking for their tax returns, and are looking at how much profit they've made in recent months.

I hope they go for the throat.

And all I can say is it's about time.

But while Congress is wrangling about what to do and the only suggestion the president has put forth is the government will deal harshly with price gouging, what can the rest of us do?

A rural area isn't exactly conducive to mass transit, although Thomas County does have its van to run to outlying communities.

The nature of the economy and businesses in general don't exactly lend themselves to walking, carpooling or riding a bike to work.

Plus many people have pickups and sport utility vehicles because they farm or need the room to get their families around.

A little digging turns up the fact that some common sense tips can help save on how much one spends on gas, and how much gets used at a time.

Staying within the speed limit helps conserve fuel, as does not accelerating suddenly.

Keeping extra weight out of the trunk can also



Tisha Cox

Off The Beaten Path

save gas.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, gas mileage can be improved by almost 15 percent by driving 55 mph instead of 65.

The EPA also recommends using air conditioning only when necessary, and rolling down the windows or using the vents when it's not so hot.

Proper tire inflation and regular maintenance can both also improve mileage. And a clean air filter can help, because "diminished air flow increases gas waste."

Another tip is to not fill up when gas prices are at their highest, because it only gives the gas companies support they don't need.

CNN and one of its partners, Edmunds.com, even recently tried some of the tips out, and found they do work.

They used a Land Rover and a Mustang GT. Now, neither vehicle gets spectacular gas mileage, but they found by using cruise control, both vehicles got much better fuel efficiency.

Also tested was the air conditioning theory and found that it doesn't make much of a difference, but driving with the windows rolled down can mean about 1-4 percent difference in mileage.

The testing also proved that something I'm

sometimes guilty of wastes a lot of gas. That would be hurrying to stop lights and doing the same once the light changes.

According to the CNN test, driving without a lead foot can improve efficiency quite a bit.

Other tips suggested from various sources are parking and walking, or doubling up on errands so one gets them all done at the same time.

It sounds easy, but it's easy to ignore just common sense when it comes to something that can be taken for granted.

I remember grumbling in the past about \$1.29, or \$1.59 gas, but now, I wish it was that low again.

Maybe it'll come down when people have had enough and refuse to buy gas when it's priced so high, or when the government finally decides to step in and be responsible and do something for its people instead of making life more difficult.

We've already "sacrificed" enough in the past five years in the name of safety. But what's secure about not even being able to get around town to run basic errands like running to the grocery store, or to a child's sporting event the next town over?

Maybe they'll listen when people send a strong message. Maybe that time is now.

Parts of this column from <http://www.howtoadvice.com/SavingGas#>, <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/consumer/17-tips.pdf>, and http://money.cnn.com/2005/09/01/Autos/tipsandadvice/gas_saving_test/index.htm

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Kline should pursue sexual predators

The Manhattan Mercury

There's a lot to be said for simply following the law rather than reading into it what one wants.

So it was that a federal judge ruled that Kansas health care providers and certain other adults are not required to report every instance of underage sexual activity they learn about.

U.S. District Court Judge J. Thomas Marten's ruling is being hailed by plaintiffs as a precedent for its defense of the "informational privacy rights" of young people. It might be that, but it's striking also for its common sense.

Judge Marten didn't undercut the 1982 Kansas law that requires doctors, nurses, counselors, teachers and others to report any reasonable suspicion of injury caused by abuse. But the judge noted that under Kansas law, not every instance

of underage sexual activity is inherently injurious, and thus, health care providers and teachers must have reason to believe that an injury stemmed from sexual activity to be required to report it.

The ruling came in a lawsuit filed by the Center for Reproductive Rights, a New York advocacy group, challenging Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline's 2003 opinion that the Kansas reporting law requires adults in certain professions to report even consensual sex between underage youth.

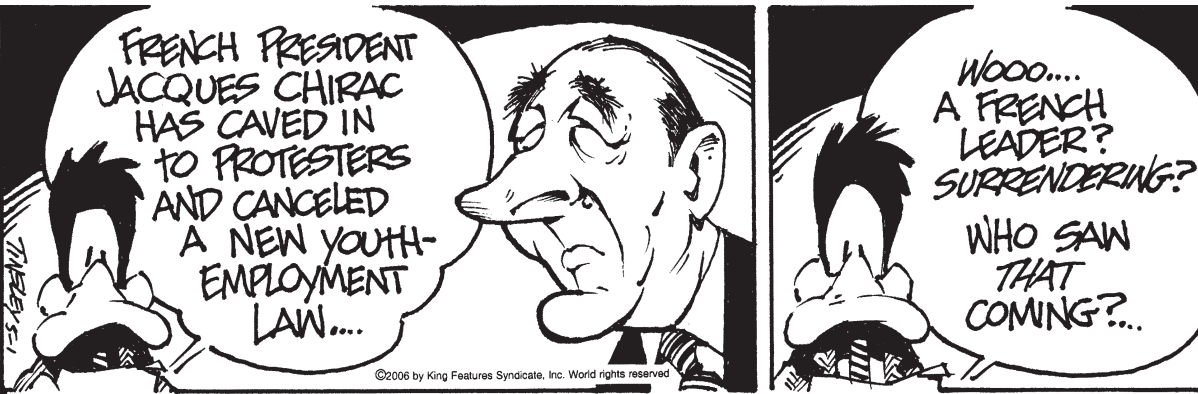
Said Judge Marten: "Contrary to defendants' claims, a prosecutor is not in a better position to make an initial determination of 'injury,' as required by the statute, than is a health care professional."

That sort of discretion has served young Kansans well since the law was written. And the ability of health care providers and others to exercise it without fear of prosecution means young Kansans who've engaged in consensual sexual activity can trust that they'll receive appropriate help and guidance without their activities being brought to the attention of law enforcement.

Mr. Kline, who said his office expected this ruling and hasn't decided whether to appeal, should forgo that step. He would do well to pursue genuine sexual predators. He ought to accept the reality that although underage sexual activity might be unwise, so is treating it as if it is worthy of the attention of the state attorney general.

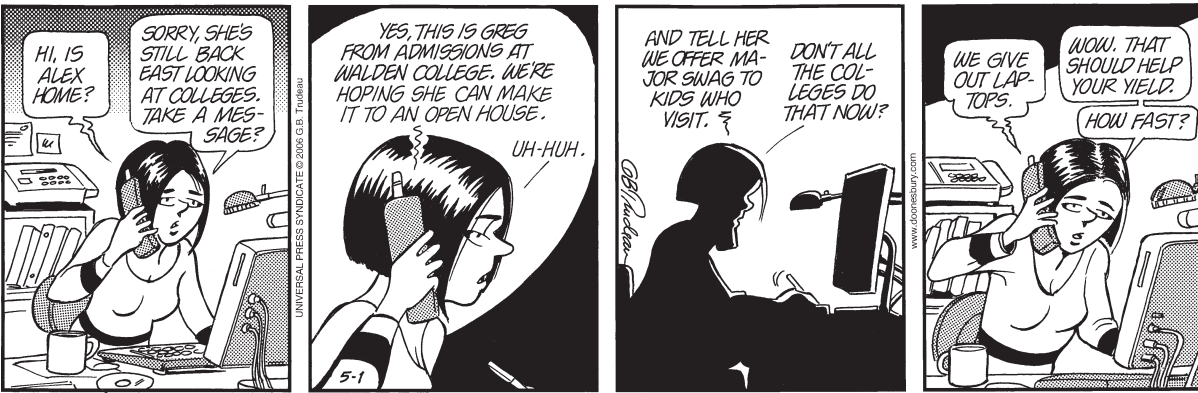
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