

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Good news on the horizon

From the Dodge City Daily Globe

As we near the start of the 2007 session of the Kansas Legislature, it is apparent that for the first time in several years the funding of K through 12 education will not be the overriding issue that it has been for the past several sessions.

The good news is that leadership from both houses of the Legislature have publicly committed to protecting the three-year funding proposal approved last session. When the 2006 Legislature passed the three-year school finance package, revenue projections showed a \$426 million deficit by fiscal 2009. Fast forward to this past November when, using revenue projections for 2007 and 2008, the Legislative Research Department now projects a positive ending balance of \$342.4 million in FY 2009. That is certainly further good news for all concerned!

The K through 12 education debate this session will center on how the promised funding will be distributed, especially the at-risk funding. Since 1992, the state has funded programs to help students academically at risk, based on the number of students who qualify for free lunch.

Last session, the Legislature approved further increases in at-risk funding over three years, added "high density" weighting and created "non-proficient" weighting that expires this year. Research clearly demonstrates that as at-risk funding has increased, student achievement has increased and the gap between all students and "at-risk" subgroups has narrowed. While the free lunch count is not a perfect measure of need, tests show free and reduced-lunch students score well below the state average, and the gap widens in the higher grades.

We agree with the recommendations of the 2010 Commission, which include:

- (1) continue to use free lunch for at-risk funding because it is still the best measure of need;
- (2) adopt a "linear transition" for high density at-risk weighting so districts do not gain or lose significant amounts of money due to small changes in enrollment; and
- (3) review the issue to ensure that at-risk funding is provided to those for whom it was intended.

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@nwkansan.com or pdecker@nwkansan.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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Hanging up accomplishes nothing

One of my pet peeves is for someone I'm talking to on the telephone to hang up on me.

In my 14 years as a reporter, I can count on one hand the number of times I've been hung up on during an interview. Despite the low number, it still chaps my hide when it happens. Not only is it rude for a person to hang up on someone, it's down right childish.

Just because a person feels bigger than the next at the other end of a telephone, does not give him or her the right to be rude. It certainly does not give a person the right to hang up on the other person. Yelling at someone or hanging up on them accomplishes nothing.

Communication is an art which must be developed.

If I've heard my husband say it once, I've heard him say it a hundred times. Communication is the key to a good marriage. I agree. Both party to a divorce, when my husband and I married we agreed we'd talk about everything, even if it meant getting our feelings hurt.

Why can't business people do the same? Hanging up on someone isn't the answer to a better business relationship, it's the demise of it. Sure, sometimes you don't like to talk to the person on the other end of the phone, but if everyone would remember the other person is just doing his or her job the working relationship would be better built. So, as 2007 unwraps itself, here's hoping each time the phone rings — for a business or personal call — friendliness will be forefront on the list of verbs which describes your reaction.



Jan Katz Ackerman

- From Where I stand

Speaking of being a friend to someone, now that the Christmas presents are opened and the parties are over, how about looking for someone to befriend during what is often a "blue" month. Post-holiday depression can creep up on someone without them even knowing it.

According to the National Mental Health Association, Jan. 1 starts the season of Holiday Blues.

Caused by factors such as failed expectations and stress, depression can attack and cause symptoms such as headache, excessive drinking, overeating and difficulty in sleeping. Mental health researchers say although many people become depressed during the holiday season, even more do so once the holidays have passed.

Here are several ways to help people cope with seasonal blues, and it is important to learn to watch for signs mentioned above so you can help combat them.

Let go of the past. Don't be disappointed if your holidays were not like they used to be. Life

brings changes. Each holiday season is different and can be enjoyed its own way. You set yourself up for sadness if everything has to be just like the "good old days." Look toward the future.

Do something for someone else. It is an old remedy, but it can help. Try volunteering some time to help others.

Don't drink too much. Excessive drinking will only make you more depressed.

Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you. Make new friends and contact someone you have lost touch with.

Find time for yourself. Don't spend all your time providing activities for your family and friends.

Studies have shown there are environmental factors which can contribute to feelings of depression during or after the holidays. Some people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD) which can result from fewer hours of sunlight as the days grow shorter during the winter months.

Try phototherapy, a treatment involving a few hours of exposure to intense light, as a way to relieve symptoms of depression. And last but not least, exercise. Exercise, while some of us don't like the word, find it very beneficial in relieving post holiday blues and it will help shed pounds which packed on because of those holiday treats.

Jan Katz Ackerman is a reporter for the Colby Free Press.

You think it's cold now?

Don't you just love this global warming?

My thermometer said 6 degrees last night. I didn't stay up to see what the low was.

Today, it's 10 degrees and warming some. The Weather Bureau swears it will get up to freezing today, and maybe in the 40s by Thursday.

I say we invite Al Gore out for the weekend and give him a shovel. He looks like he could use the exercise.

Truth is, this is kind of weird weather. The storms that moved through over the holidays came from huge wet cyclones, massive lows that over tropical waters would have spun up hurricanes in a jiffy. The first one stretched from Canada to Texas by the time it hit here.

The storm last week rumbled with thunder, observers at the Goodland weather station said, usually a sign of a spring or fall cyclone. Whether anyone told the storm it was unseasonal is another thing.

We've been overdue for some wet weather, and I doubt there are many people complaining. Except for those stuck at the end of a muddy road.

Despite the cold this week in the storm's wake, one hallmark of both storms was warmth. For winter storms, they pushed wet heavy snow that turned quickly to rain as they spun out of the mountains.

Oberlin got the brunt of the ice line the first time, the storm trimming thousands of tree limbs. Norton to Phillipsburg got the ice this week, tons of it hanging from power lines, trees,



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

buildings, you name it.

With more than 2.84 inches of water in the last two weeks, Oberlin finished the year at 23.5 inches, maybe 2 1/2 inches above normal. Maybe the drought really is over. For sure, the wheat crop will be sitting pretty into spring.

Driving over the weekend was something else again. As my wife mentioned elsewhere, we had tickets to the KU basketball game in Lawrence and a commitment to take our son and his roommate. It was crazy, but we went.

All you had to do was get east of Norcat, we figured, and it wouldn't be that bad. That, it turns out, depends on how you define bad. From the county line clear across Norton County, the road was a sheet of ice, rough enough to drive on, clean enough to see the yellow line through.

At 35 mph tops, it took a full two hours to get within sight of Phillipsburg. From there on, it was smooth sailing. Few cars out. A wet road.

Coming back was a little different. Out in the Flint Hills, it was snowing, leaving a skim of

fresh snow on the road. Drivers paying absolutely no attention to the weather would come over the top of a hill, see snow, hit the brakes. We passed a dozen or more in the ditch before Junction City. One flipped, but no one was hurt.

The snow band extended from there to Salina and up to Concordia. We drove 40 mph most of that distance. We stopped counting the slideoffs. West of there to Norton, the road was clear, and from Norton to Oberlin, snowpacked.

Would a sensible person have gone? Probably not. But even we wouldn't have gone west.

I've been thinking for some time we were overdue for this kind of weather.

When it's dry, you get so used to it being dry. Then it changes. Climate's like that.

There's truth to the idea of global warming. The earth, in fact, has been warming since the 1700s. Glaciers, alpine and arctic, have been shrinking, ice packs retreating.

No one knows for sure how to differentiate that from accelerated warming caused by "greenhouse" gases. By the time we'll know for sure, we could be in the soup.

The alternative is global cooling. The affects of warming are scary, but you don't want to deal with global cooling. The last ice age brought glaciers as far as south as Kansas City.

You think it's cold now?

— Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

