

Free Press Viewpoint

Teach technology to kids as a life skill

The BBC America news service had a small item on Thursday about how some news magazines are going to have video ads or stories right in along with the print. These videos will be on millimeters-thin screens – not all that different from cell phone screens – attached to the pages, will hold about 40 minutes of video and will have rechargeable batteries.

What a fascinating modern age we live in. New technology seems to be inserting itself into our lives at an ever-faster rate these days, and nowhere more so than education. Whereas 20 years ago, a student would be lucky to spend five minutes on a computer in a week, today there are computers in every classroom, mobile shelves of lap-tops roaming the halls and touch screen white-boards tacked up where chalk boards used to be.

Some may see this as a bad thing. But we need to teach according to the times. The whole point of school is to prepare kids to function in the world, and for better or worse, that means learning new technology. Like school, many jobs exclusively use computers, robots or other technology where they wouldn't have even 10 years ago. If we accept this as reality, we need to help our kids adjust into that reality.

Teachers have already gotten started. From putting together pod-casts for the Internet to demonstrating electronic voting machines, teachers are using more and more technology in the classroom. Some teachers even have a designated "Google Wrangler," one student whose job it is to run to the nearest computer and look something up if needed.

This is a good example of how technology can augment a class room rather than being the focus of the lesson. Teachers are, of course, human like the rest of us and they don't know everything. So when a subject comes up in class that the teacher doesn't know, why not make a lesson out of looking it up.

There's a lot more reliable information on the internet than people think, you just have to know where to get it. And we can teach kids how to do that. Imagine a scenario where a subject like health care comes up in class. A teacher might assign every student to look for information on the Internet and then see how different every student's results differed. You would likely have 30 different takes on the issue. The teacher could then examine each one in turn and show where and how the site got their information and how reliable it might or might not be. Knowing how to find good information is always going to be valuable, whether they are looking in a library or on the Internet.

When you change the focus from learning how to use new technology to learning how it fits into society, you give the students skills they can use beyond just texting faster. Don't just teach how to use it, teach when, where and why they should use it.

However, all things must be taken in moderation and this applies to technology as well. Most teachers would tell you that the single most valuable tool they have in teaching is one-on-one time with the student. We need to make sure that technology does not replace that kind of human interaction.

Kids today are indoctrinated into technology far earlier than in any other generation, and we need to help them understand how it relates to them, to their family, their friends and to the world. We need to encourage this kind of learning in combination with traditional methods of instruction, because for the vast majority of students, face time with a living, breathing teacher is still going to be the best way to get an education.

— Kevin Bottrell

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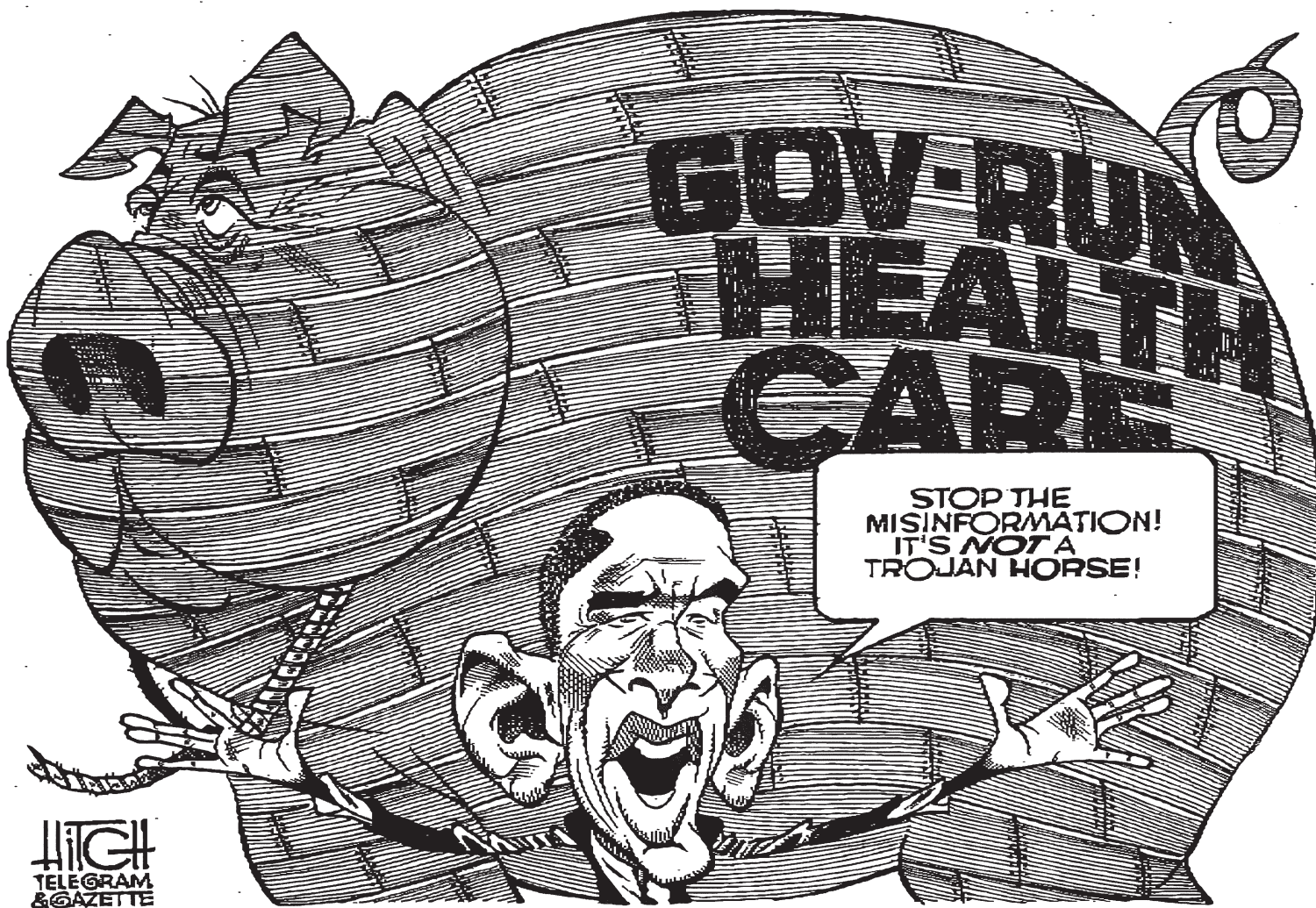
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August optimists hit the practice field

There is something magical about the beginning of a football season.

As I watched the Colby High School football team practice on Monday I got the same feeling I got when I donned the pads back in high school. On that first day of practice, previous seasons are forgotten and an "anything is possible" feeling dominates the hearts and minds of coaches and players alike. This phenomenon doesn't discriminate between teams. It infects everyone, from the defending state champions to the team who failed to win more than two games last season. In that first week of practice, all teams are filled with an unexplainable optimism that this could be the year that something special happens. This feeling may last for months or it may be extinguished after a crushing loss at the start of the season, but in those first few weeks every team feels that they could beat the odds, conquer all challengers and blaze their own path to the state championship.

The other thing I noticed while viewing practice and trying to get my technologically-deprived mind to take a good picture was how some of the scenes looked eerily familiar from my playing days. There were players charging in a few minutes late with mixed panic and anxiety on their faces. There were burly linemen chugging down water and talking as sweat streamed down their faces. There were natural athletes and veterans who carried themselves with a confidence that separated them from everyone else. The days when they were wide-



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

eyed newcomers to the game, dealing with the anxiety and fear that infects most of us while trying something new, seemed to be nothing but a distant memory to them.

While I look back on those first few weeks of practice with fondness now, I know they are no walk in the park. I can't recall myself or many of my friends greeting two-a-day practices with much enthusiasm. Most of us had a sense of impending doom as we watched our care-free summer days shrink and those summer practices under the hot summer sun drawing near. I remember sitting in the grass doing calisthenics under the hot August sun with sweat seeping into my eyes, wondering why I was willing to do this season after season. When I glanced around to see my comrades, I noticed that many of them seemed to be thinking the same thing.

But then, after a few weeks of group misery, the conditioning and agility drills lessened and the coaches finally decided to allow us to start scrimmaging. Then the time would come when I would get my first clean tackle on the running back and I suddenly remembered why

I had been willing to drag myself out of bed in the morning for a practice full of running and demanding coaches who seemed nothing like those mild-mannered fellows you chatted with while lifting weights over the summer. After I laid someone out for the first time, the instincts and adrenaline took over and football became fun again.

The young athletes beginning their tennis, golf, volleyball and cross country seasons may get the same feelings in their first few weeks of practice. I use football as an example because that's what I played when I was younger. But it's quite possible that this indescribable optimism envelopes people in every sport when fall is just around the corner.

For many people this feeling maybe nothing more than an illusion. But if it's an illusion, we don't want to hear about it. The spontaneous optimism that exists even for the traditional underdogs before their first football game may seem like a fool's paradise to some people, but they should be considerate enough not to say anything to the fool. The beginning of fall symbolizes new beginnings and new hope. Nowhere does this hope exist more than in the hearts of those who strap on the pads and prepare themselves for a season that at the moment seems to be full of infinite possibilities.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Town residents defend sportscaster

To the Editor:

As a former trustee of the Colby Community College Board, I want to take issue with the letter written by Mr. Hall from Texas in last week's Free Press. First of all, I've known Rich Epp since I was in college here in Colby in the '70s. I know the commitment he has had to the college for nearly 40 years. I've traveled with him for years to sporting events and know the investment he makes to cover college and Colby High School sports. No one has ever done it better.

People should be thankful that J&R Marketing is providing several thousand dollars for scholarships to the radio department and is volunteering to teach two classes on broadcasting, something that has never happened before. This is money that the tax payers don't have to provide.

Finally, it's my opinion that there are a few people in the community who want to get rid of J&R Marketing, perhaps for their own financial gain. In my opinion, they have used their friend in Texas to write that letter for financial profit of their own. If they need more revenue, maybe they should apply the work ethic Mr. Epp has applied over the past 40 years instead of trying to destroy his business.

Larry McDonald, Colby

Sportscaster respected at college

To the Editor:

During the past 12 months I have had the privilege of travelling to numerous Colby Community College sporting events with Rich Epp. Traveling with Rich, I've gained insight



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

to the history of sports in northwest Kansas. Rich has been broadcasting events for 38 years and retains the specifics of every notable game he has announced. As a sports enthusiast, I coveted our time together as Rich shared his views and memories of the coaches, fans and student-athletes that have worn, mentored and cheered the "Trojan Blue."

Rich is a native of Thomas County and has made Colby his home for most of his life; today the Epp family continues to have its home-grown roots in Thomas County through the lives of three generations. Each member of the family is a positive contributor to the quality of life we enjoy in Thomas County.

During my travels across the Jayhawk West Conference with Rich, I gained a great amount of respect and admiration for my friend. He is a graduate of the Colby Community College broadcasting department and was the first student speaker at a Colby graduation ceremony. Rich has maintained a relationship with the college for nearly 40 years, most recently as the professional award-winning broadcaster of Trojan sporting events.

For Rich, a sporting event does not begin when the first whistle is blown or the umpire cries out "play ball." Rich arrives two to three hours before a game to interact with players, coaches, athletic directors and game officials.

When a fan listens to him broadcast, they know Rich has done his homework. He will seek out a player with an unfamiliar name to learn how to pronounce it. Time is spent with the coaches giving them an opportunity to connect with fans via the pre-game and post-game interviews. On most game days, Rich is the first to arrive and the last to leave – I think he is the last to leave so I will have the navigator fully warmed up for the ride home.

Broadcasting students that wish to pursue careers in sports broadcasting have been mentored on several occasions and provided opportunities to "join Rich in the booth" to see and hear firsthand the skills and work ethic needed. During the upcoming year, Rich will be an instructor at the college to cultivate, motivate, and teach students seeking the counsel of a local legend that has given back to the college that invested in him nearly 40 years ago.

You can hear the dynamic, distinctive voice of Rich Epp during the upcoming season by tuning your FM dial to 91.9 or the world-wide web at www.j-rmarketing.net. I want to convey my personal thanks to all the financial sponsors of the broadcast; made possible through the honest and loyal relationship Rich maintains with each. You make it convenient for anyone with access to a computer to enjoy the efforts of our Trojan student athletes through the professional broadcasts of Rich Epp. I wish to convey my sincere appreciation to all the property taxpayers of Thomas county and the income tax payers of the state of Kansas for providing nearly two-thirds of the operating funds for Colby Community College. You make the greatest of financial commitments to this important endeavor of higher education.

I hope to see you at the games.
Ron Boller, Colby

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

