

Other Viewpoints

Athletic director a positive choice

We tip our hat to University of Kansas Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little. In hiring Sheahon Zenger as athletics director, she has chosen well.

Dr. Zenger — he has a doctorate from KU in educational policy and leadership — is Kansas born and reared and has more than a little purple in him as well. Not only did he earn his bachelor's degree in 1987 from Kansas State University, he also earned a master's degree in journalism and mass communications in 1992. His roots in this state run deep indeed. He was born in Salina and has lived in Hays and Lawrence as well as Manhattan.

Perhaps more important to sports fans, he was an assistant football coach at Manhattan High School the year he graduated from K-State and a couple years later worked as assistant recruiting coordinator and director of football operations for none other than KSU coach Bill Snyder.

That isn't the extent of his ties to KSU. From 2002 to 2005, he was an associate athletics director for development at K-State, leaving only when Illinois State University offered him its top athletics post.

He is universally admired for his integrity, his professionalism, his knowledge and his work ethic.

He'll be busy initially helping the KU Athletics Department continue its recovery from both the ticket scandals and from the scandal surrounding his predecessor, Lew Perkins.

We welcome him back to Kansas, and we'd like to wish him well — unless his teams are doing battle with K-State.

It is our sense that Dr. Zenger won't just run the athletic department of K-State's biggest rival. He also can be a powerful ally collaborating with KSU Athletics Director John Currie and others in advancing the athletic as well as academic interests of this state's two largest universities. This is, after all, the era of realignment in college athletics and a challenging time for public universities as a whole.

As KSU and KU demonstrated when it appeared that the Big 12 Conference was imploding, there is much more to unite us than to divide us.

— *The Manhattan Mercury, via the Associated Press*

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U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building Room C-4, Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 224-6521

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Would you call it a sweet 'n' sour harvest?

I harvested the lemon crop yesterday. It wasn't much. Just one.

Let's just say I haven't been invited to join the Sunkist co-op yet.

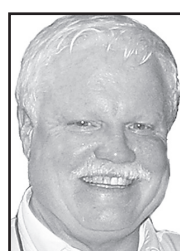
But I'm willing to bet it was in the top 10 yields in Kansas. And I have four more on the branches, one a quarter inch across, the others about half an inch. It'll take them most of the year to mature — if they make it.

And I have to say, this one may be my proudest achievement yet as lemon grower. The crop was big enough, and hung around long enough before it ripened, to have a name, though I never quite got around to giving it one.

It measured nearly 4 inches, by far the largest fruit I've harvested from my tree. There have been years I've had two or three lemons, but never have I raised one this big.

I picked it for New Year's and made lemonade, one from each half. Cynthia agreed, it was the best lemonade of the year, but then usually we use frozen juice.

There's just no comparison between the juice from these lemons and store-bought fruit or frozen, reconstituted juice. Regular lemon juice is pale. The juice from these home-grown lemons has a light golden color, even richer than the skin. The flavor is strong, though being lemon juice, mostly it's just sour.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

I always hate to cut one of the lemons, but you can't just keep them. After six to eight months, though, the lemon in the kitchen has become almost part of the family. And the juice is gone so quickly.

I've been growing lemons for the better part of 15 years now. My tree I found in a pile of little, rooted cuttings on sale one summer at Dillon's. Who knows how many trees out of that truckload survive today?

Mine is thriving right now, though it has had its ups and downs. It grew wildly the first couple of years. It's outgrown several pots, and I had to cut it back to keep it a house plant.

It lives in the kitchen, by the door, where it gets lots of sun, in the winter, and outside on the back deck in the summer. Like any crop, sometimes it's at the mercy of the weather.

It loves the afternoon sun, but you have to keep it watered. As soon as the pot dries out,

and not a couple of days later, it wants a gallon. Can't keep it wet, or the roots will rot. Can't let it dry out, or the leaves suffer.

A couple of years ago, it got caught in a sudden hailstorm. We were out of town. The hail ruined the roof, broke our siding and stripped leaves off the lemon tree. It lost three of a record five-lemon crop.

The leaves were just coming back that fall when a 50 mph north wind stripped the tender new shoots off. For the better part of a year, that tree looked mostly bare. But last summer, it made a good recovery, aided by the fact that I finally got the upper hand on the sap-sucking bugs that like to infest it.

Like any other crop, the lemons have a long road to navigate before harvest. I enjoy helping them along, watching to see how the story will turn out — and the occasional lemonade.

And it gives me something to do while the garden is quiet and my wheat patch is dormant. (The wheat looks pretty good, by the way, despite the dry weather. But that, as they say, is another story.)

Steve Haynes is editor and publisher of The Colby Free Press and president of NorWest Newspapers. In his spare time, whenever that is, he like to ride and watch trains.

High test scores not all they seem

"Top Test Scores From Shanghai Stun Educators" was the *New York Times* headline describing the Dec. 7 release of international test data.

For the first time, mainland China participated in the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA). The 5,100 15-year-olds from Shanghai blew away the traditional front runners.

In science, China's students scored 575, followed by Finland (554), Hong Kong (549) and Singapore (542). In reading, Chinese students led with 556, followed by Korea (539), Finland (536), Hong Kong (533) and Singapore (526). And in math, China left everyone in the dust with their score of 600, followed by Singapore (562), Hong Kong (555), and Korea (546).

Our selection of 5,100 American students scored in the middle of the pack, or lower: science (501), reading (500) and math (487). PISA scores center on 500, placing us about 23rd among competing countries.

Supporters of test-taking responded predictably. Chester E. Finn Jr., a U.S. Department of Education official under President Reagan and rabid supporter of No Child Left Behind, was "stunned." Education Secretary Arnie Duncan declared the results "a wake-up call."

However, misconceptions surround China's performance. Educationists complained that China was selecting its elite against our average.

"If they can do this in Shanghai in 2009, they can do it in ten cities in 2019 and in 50 cities by 2029," Finn said. Those arguments are wrong. China can replicate today's results with students from many regions. And our highest-ranking American students (from Massachusetts) could not match the Chinese scores.

I visit China each summer. From Kunming to Xi'an, from Chongqing to Wuhan, from Beijing to Nanjing, China can field student teams who will outscore the rest of the world.



John Richard Schrock

• Education Frontlines

Twelve years ago in Xinxiang, at a high school across from Henan Normal University, I sat at the back of a class of honor students being drilled for the Biology Olympiad, an international competition China has dominated for decades. I watched students answer detailed, rapid-fire questions on the biochemistry leading from DNA to protein production. It was memorization of detail well beyond what I have ever seen in American high school biology classes.

Experts cry out for a revival of our Sputnik-era educational push. We boosted teachers' content training when we woke up to find the Soviet Union first into space. That was content reform. Science teachers returned to school to update their science knowledge. Emporia State University (then known as Kansas State Teachers College) was a major hub for biology re-training for teachers across the nation. Nobel-award winner George Beadle came to Emporia to help retrain biology teachers.

Today, any such "Sputnik-era reform" would be hijacked by the test makers, the online learning movement sponsored by the computer companies, the businessmen who want schoolwork to be pure job training, and the educationists who believe you don't have to know anything to teach.

The U.S. does need more and better science teachers to teach two to three times more science in public schools, a larger curriculum that would barely match that of other developed countries.

We must abandon nonmetric units if we are

ever to produce students who can speak the language of engineering and physics. And we need to restore professional curricular decision-making to the classroom teacher and stop all standardized external-to-class assessment.

In 2001, the Korean Ministry of Education staff looked at their first place in another international assessment (TIMSS) and concluded: big deal, we train our students to take tests but we don't get Nobel Prizes. This observation has been taken to heart by China, Finland, and Singapore. They are struggling to return the decision on what to teach, how to teach and when to teach to the teachers.

Yes, China blew the top off the international tests. But China has yet to win one Nobel Prize for a Chinese scientist educated and researching in China. American has over 270 Nobel Prizes, with the American-born scientists educated by earlier teachers operating free from external tests and dictated curricula. While we are adopting a national teach-to-the test Common Core curriculum, other countries are retreating from a national curriculum and moving to teacher responsibility.

Perhaps we will succeed in standardizing a teach-to-the-test curriculum and reach the point where we can take first place in the international tests. But like South Korea: big deal; in training students to take tests, we will lose the creativity to get Nobel Prizes.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.



Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

