



Other Viewpoints

Guns on campus need closer study

The Hutchinson Community College Board of Trustees deserves respect for taking no delays in seeking a potential eventual exemption from a new state law allowing concealed handguns on state college campuses.

In their zeal to be pro-gun, Kansas legislators passed a new law this year legalizing concealed carry in all state and municipal buildings unless the building has adequate security measures to prevent weapons from being carried inside. However, it also allows certain institutions to seek an exemption through the attorney general's office.

The Hutchinson college first must conduct a study of the implications of the state law on the campus, determining whether it would be in the best interest of the college to permit students and other people to carry concealed handguns or to incur the cost of security measures at building entrances. The trustees last week authorized the study.

Should it find that security measures are a safer solution than arming students and faculty – and how any study could conclude otherwise is unfathomable – then the state should pay for the security measures, not the local taxpayers or students. That would put a price on this reckless, politically motivated piece of legislation, which might cause legislators to reconsider the value of it.

More people with more guns will not make college campuses safer – especially when the alternative is metal detectors and guards at building entrances. One can only imagine the carnage of a shoot-out in a crowded hallway of a classroom building. Or, in the alternative, the cost of security at every building entrance.

The college's board and administration are following the only responsible course of action that they can in response to this new law.

– The Hutchinson News, via the Associated Press

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roberts.senate.gov/public/

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Fax (202) 225-5124 moran.senate.gov/public/

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: huelskamp.house.gov

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 136-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 Ralph.Ostmeyer@senate.ks.gov

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Working together brings disease down

One of the most amazing public-health efforts of our lifetime has been created, pushed along and financed not by governments, but by a private organization, Rotary International.

Starting in 1985, Rotary saw the need and the potential to wipe out this dread crippling disease. Those of us who grew up in the 1950s remember the fear that gripped the nation each summer, the television footage of children in iron lungs, the crippled classmates who'd survived.

Rotarians decided to do something about it. The world had by then vanquished smallpox. Why not polio?

By 1988, the group had succeeded in making an end to polio a top international health concern. In the 25 years since, Rotary has raised more than \$1 billion from members and fund raisers. Millions of children have been vaccinated around the world, and the picture has changed radically – and for the better.

In 1988, polio was endemic in most of Europe, south Asia and Africa and in much of Latin America. The anti-polio coalition has succeeded in driving the disease out of all of Africa except parts of Nigeria, however, and completely banished it from the Americas.

The only big concentration of polio today is in the mountains of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Much of this area is wracked by war and dissension. Volunteers sometimes face death



Steve Haynes

- Along the Sappa

from radicals convinced that their work is a Western plot to kill Muslim children, or worse.

Here I must point out, I have been a member of Rotary clubs for more than 30 years in Kansas and Colorado and have contributed in my own small way to this effort. I can't claim to have done much, mind you, just a little, but this effort requires the participation of many. I've tried to do my part.

In the 1980s, we thought polio would be gone by now. Under the original timetable for Polio Plus, it would have been just an unpleasant memory. It's not gone yet, but the end may be in sight. And the delay in its eradication does not diminish the luster of this international effort one bit.

Polio just turned out to be a little tougher than we thought. The battle is being won, yes, but it's not over yet. And it won't be for a few more years.

No one is planning to give up. Rotarians all over the world remain committed to this cause.

The Oberlin Rotary Club alone has given more than \$10,000 to the effort in recent years, though that is just a drop in the bucket. It will give more.

It's safe to say that none of the partners in this effort will quit until the last case of polio is recorded, the last unprotected child is vaccinated and the last campaign closed out. It's been more than 60 years since we stood in line for that first round of vaccine. A lot has happened since then.

Polio's history will be written later, but already, millions and millions of children sleep safe from the disease that once sent a chill of fear through the world's mothers each summer.

It will be a triumph of medical science, yes, but also a triumph of the best of human spirit over an enemy that is more resilient than we first thought.

Editor's note: The Colby Rotary Club has given \$250 since Jan. 1, and is committed to making that at least \$500 by the end of the year.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

Learning grows through group effort

"Personalized education" is the newest fad in education. Who could possibly be opposed to each student learning at his or her own speed?

But we should be able to see through this scam. We were brought up in the rich context of a classroom. Just as fish are unaware of the water around them, students are often unaware of the rich context of learning together with our classmates in a well-led classroom.

When the teacher asked a question, perhaps your hand went up when others did not know the answer. Or perhaps their hands went up and you thought "Uh, oh. I don't know the answer." And you listened to the classmate who did know. The book explained the concept. The teacher explained the concept. And now a classmate explained it in words that most could understand.

Such class questioning and discussion serves to keep students moving forward as a group. Teachers use group discussion to detect and correct misconceptions.

And there is motivation in learning together. Left alone, there were those days we might not feel motivated to learn the next lesson. But we came to school and moved ahead with the rest of our class. And on those days when we were excited about the next lesson, we helped energize other classmates who were not having their best day.

Educationists who want every student learning by themselves point to masters and doctoral students who pursue advanced studies alone. But that self-motivation comes with maturity. Such independence was not there when they were in the early grades. Most youngsters need to learn together amidst a group of peers. The teacher is leading a parade that keeps students marching forward and motivated to not fall behind.



John Richard Schrock

- Education Frontlines

The classroom teacher gets continuous and immediate feedback. If every student is puzzled, it is easy to detect that another explanation or more examples are needed before moving ahead. When students' eyes and their explanations show that everyone understands, the teacher can move ahead. Face-to-face interaction with a classroom of students is efficient. There is no need to waste hours administering standardized tests to diagnose students. A perceptive teacher knows from the face-to-face group interaction exactly where each student is. Less time spent on testing means more time spent on teaching. Stronger students help the weaker students learn. Some students who nevertheless lag may need extra teacher attention; but they also feel the responsibility to keep up with their classmates.

"Personalized" education is not new. Any teacher in the classroom from 1969 to 1973 knows: "Been there. Done that." In 1970, I returned to my middle school classroom in Kentucky from a summer institute at Indiana State University where "individualized instruction" was touted as the wave of the future. I dutifully switched from class lessons to having every student work on individual activities and projects. Combined with "diagnostic teaching" techniques, I gave pre-tests and post-tests for every concept or skill. 180 students worked on 180 different activities.

As lone learners, students learned concepts

much slower, were far more likely to gain ownership of wrong concepts, and received no motivation from their classmates to move ahead each day. Needless to say, my over-worked colleagues and I returned to standard classroom teaching the next semester, as did teachers across America.

Schools of education moved on to other fads. But education has a problem with amnesia. They forget what works, and leave good practices behind. And they forget what doesn't work, and we make the same mistakes again.

So why are we now returning to the old failed "individualized instruction" re-labeled as "personalized instruction"? The computer-educational complex sees big profits in placing every student in front of impersonal electronic devices that become obsolete in 3 to 4 years. Testing companies want to sell us programmed-learning and standardized assessments. And schools want to appear techie.

Repeating this failed educational reform will waste thousands of dollars per class. The cost to the vast majority of our young students who end up learning less by themselves – will be lifelong.

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.

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters.

Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

