

## Other Viewpoints

### 'Model state' looking battered

After the 2012 election put the entire Legislature under conservative Republican control, Gov. Sam Brownback touted Kansas as a "red-state model" for the nation. By Friday that model was looking a bit black and blue, though, as House and Senate leaders traded blame over their inability to agree on taxes and the budget.

Every legislative session includes some culminating drama, inevitably leading to deals and adjournment. But House Speaker Ray Merrick, R-Stilwell, and Senate President Susan Wagle, R-Wichita, clearly overpromised when they said the usual 90-day session would be trimmed to 80 days.

Brownback and Wagle underestimated the sales job necessary to persuade House Republicans, many of whom have signed no-tax pledges, that it technically would not be a tax increase to prevent a three year sales-tax increase from ending June 30.

The governor also likely overreached in trying to pass a two-year budget, given the uncertain revenue stream in the wake of last year's massive income-tax cuts. And it was a mistake for the governor, Merrick and Wagle to try to negotiate a fiscal deal behind closed doors, bypassing the appropriate legislative conference committees and the public.

By Friday, when the chambers were at a nasty impasse, there was even talk of Brownback vetoing any budget bill if the House didn't also give him his desired extension of the current 6.3 percent sales-tax rate and resulting \$250 million annually. A lot depends on how this conservative infighting ends, including whether the state universities and community colleges will see flat funding (Brownback's choice), a 4 percent cut (House) or a 2 or 1 percent cut (Senate proposals). The governor is right in arguing that any cut would kill the system's momentum, as well as hamper the ability to attract and retain top faculty.

Meanwhile, lawmakers have been misusing all the idle hours, coming up with bad ideas to further mess up the appellate courts and try to prevent any use of state funds to promote anything resembling gun control.

And Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Ty Masterson, R-Andover, inexplicably thought it would be a good idea to further complicate budget negotiations, urging passage of a proviso aimed at crippling implementation of the Common Core reading and math standards and new science standards. Never mind that school districts around the state have spent three years and a lot of money getting ready for the Common Core standards, which were voluntarily embraced by 45 states and are not a case of "the federal government imposing on our schools," as Masterson put it, or that bills to block Common Core didn't even have enough support to make it out of either chamber's education committee.

In the coming days, Brownback and his fellow conservatives must demonstrate that they not only can win elections but also govern. Doing so responsibly means coping with the self-inflicted budget crisis without further harming schools and higher education or vulnerable Kansans who rely on social services.

At least Kansans now know that like-minded doesn't mean lockstep.

— Rhonda Holman, *The Wichita Eagle*, via the Associated Press

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HITCH SUNDAY TELEGRAM

### New grandson livens family visit

He's a cute little thing, but then all babies are.

We drove more than 20 hours to get to Augusta, Ga., to check out the new arrival, our grandson, Grayson Henry Blake.

He was born a few days early, so we didn't make the big day, but he was less than a week old when we came rolling up.

Each year, we fly to Georgia in the fall, since you never know what the weather will be like in October or November. We drive down to see our kids in the spring, when we always seem to have a truck full of stuff to take down to our daughters. We're really lucky to have both girls living close together, even if they aren't very close to us.

This year, the drive corresponded nicely with the impending arrival of Mr. Blake.

We spent the first few days at our oldest daughter's house. She had taken Thursday and Friday off from work and was determined to have "her" time when she would be around. Her sister, after all, is on maternity leave for the next couple of months.

That turned out to be a better choice than we knew.

After arriving at eldest daughter's and unloading the junk we brought down for her, we headed for youngest daughter's suburban home.

It took only a few minutes to unload the rest of the stuff and meet our new grandson.

Granddaughter Taylor is 3 now, and instead



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

of hiding behind mother, like she did last fall, she came right out and greeted us. Six months can make a big difference in remembering a grandmother and grandfather. Besides, we always bring something for her. This time it was a snow globe, some stickers and sippy straws. Little things, but she was enchanted.

The baby was passed around and duly admired, held and petted. He accepted all this attention as his due, but still told us rather vocally that Mom was his favorite person, not to mention his lunch.

Friday, we spent with the oldest daughter and her husband, hanging out and getting over the long drive.

We had a date to take Taylor to the zoo on Saturday. Steve made it. I didn't.

I was up most of the night running to the bathroom. I was in no shape to go anywhere, and in no shape to be near any of my grandchildren.

I spent all of Saturday in bed. Sunday, when we were supposed to move to youngest daughter's house, we stayed put. There was no way I

was going anywhere near my week-old grandson.

Everyone went out for Mother's Day lunch. I stayed home and had another Gatorade. By Monday, though, I was well, and we changed houses.

Youngest daughter is still trying to figure out a lot of things. They moved into a new house just a month ago and the new baby arrived shortly thereafter.

Grayson has not been a totally happy baby. He won't take a pacifier and he cried a lot when he wasn't eating. Daughter was trying to get him on a schedule, but he wasn't buying it.

She soon learned that he was just hungry. She was surprised. She had fed Taylor and always had plenty of milk. But this time, the baby was draining her and still wanting more.

Once she figured out what his problem was and started to supplement with formula, he was a much happier camper — and so was she.

There's a lot of difference, she's learning, between a boy and a girl. Taylor's a petite little thing, but Grayson gained a pound his first two weeks. And wanted more to eat.

Oh, honey, you just wait until he's a teenager. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

### 'No Child' leaves teachers behind

A decade of No Child Left Behind policy has dramatically changed the status of teachers across America.

I visit student teachers across Kansas, and I see the growing disrespect this federal teach-to-the-test system has generated.

In September 2002, before penalties for not making Adequate Yearly Progress were in place, I wrote a commentary in *The Wichita Eagle* titled: "Students Responsible for Learning, Too."

Kansas had adopted Quality Performance Accreditation and begun accrediting public schools under this plan in 1995, six years before President Bush imposed No Child Left Behind. Both systems were based on Total Quality Management, a business model designed for factories.

Teachers could feel they were becoming the scapegoat for all failures in public education.

Jody Marquardt, a superb veteran biology teacher, astutely observed: "They are blaming us, aren't they?"

The *Eagle* commentary explained how all students have a responsibility to come to class prepared, pay attention, complete homework, etc. The commentary included my photo.

I had a student teacher in Wichita in spring 2003. I had never before visited the school. As I walked down the main hall to check in at the office, several teachers I had never seen before greeted me with an enthusiastic "Hi!" After I had evaluated my student, I got the same greetings in the office as I checked out.

"Very friendly school," I commented.

"Oh, you are posted in the teacher's lounge," my student said. "Some teachers read your article to their students."

And she pointed to my *Eagle* commentary tacked on the office bulletin board.

Fast forward exactly one decade to Sep-



**John Richard Schrock**

• Education Frontlines

tember 2012. Now these weekly education commentaries are sent to all Kansas newspapers and about 80 run them. The title of the column was "Hitting the Ceiling" and it addressed why it was unlikely that state assessment scores could go higher, but the theme again was about students having responsibility for their learning too. Regardless of how well teachers teach, students will not score high, and it is not the teachers' fault.

These two essays were essentially about the same topic: student responsibility. But what a difference a decade makes.

I get much feedback from my colleagues in public classrooms, and I am careful to mask my sources and protect them.

The teachers' enthusiasm for the message was no less than in 2002. But one teacher said her colleagues secretly passed the commentary around teacher-to-teacher in a brown manila envelope. Another e-mailed that the commentary was taped inside the faculty restroom stalls where administrators never come.

There are still public schools in Kansas where administrators and teachers work together as professionals. But in a growing number of schools, administrators are foremen and teachers are mere assembly-line workers, expected to take orders and shut up. This jackbooted attitude is directly due to No Child penalties that remain under different wording.

This dysfunction in communication — with

parents and teachers at the bottom, and deaf administrators and school boards at the top — was clearly evident at the May state Board of Education meeting. While over 20 parents and teachers from across Kansas spoke against the national Common Core Curriculum, a representative from the Kansas Association of School Boards reported that they had "...heard no objections from any of our school board members..." against them.

Some veteran teachers in the more repressive Kansas schools have been encouraged to retire early — which they interpret as desire by administrators for younger teachers who are more willing to quietly comply with orders. "Teach Plus," a Boston teacher-policy organization, released an October 2012 survey of 1,075 teachers. 71 percent of the rookies felt student growth should be part of their evaluation as a teacher but only 41 percent of veteran teachers concurred. 51 percent of rookies wanted student scores to be over 20 percent of their evaluation; only 23 percent of veteran teachers agreed.

The real legacy of No Child is not just overtesting of a generation of students, where memorization replaces creative thinking, but the destruction of professional cooperation among teachers and administrators.

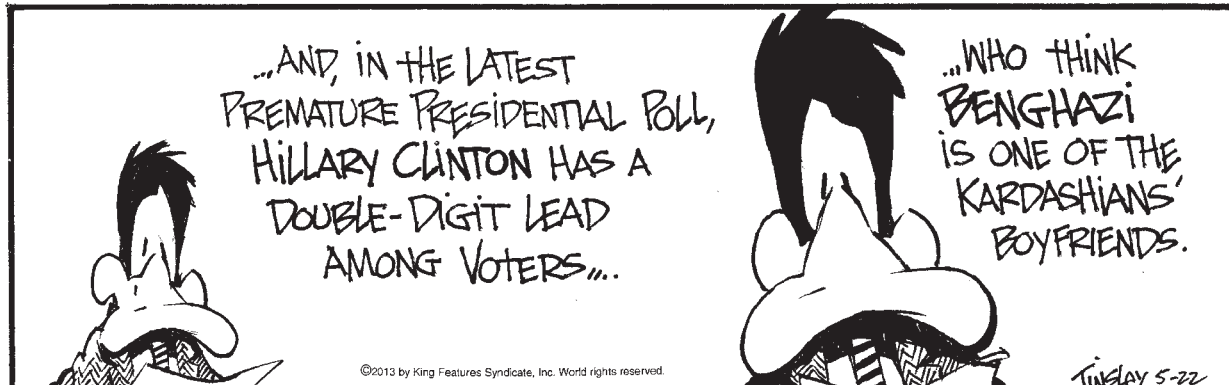
If we ended this teach-to-the-test tyranny today, we will still have many young teachers who have accepted de-professionalized teaching and who have adopted blue-collar attitudes.

This is another commentary teachers can pass around in secret envelopes and hang in faculty restroom stalls.

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



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