



The Coffey County
Republican

Published by
Faimon Publications, LLC
324 Hudson, P.O. Box A,
Burlington, KS 66839-0218
(ISSN 145-700)

Published Thursdays.
Periodicals postage paid at
Burlington, Kansas. Phone
(620) 364-5325; Fax (620)
364-2607.

Postmaster: Send change of
address forms to P.O. Box A,
Burlington, KS 66839-0218.

Official newspaper for
Coffey County, the cities of
Burlington, New Strawn,
LeRoy, Gridley, Lebo,
Hartford and Waverly;
Lebo-Waverly USD 243,
Burlington USD 244,
LeRoy-Gridley USD 245.

Member of the Kansas
Press Association, National
Federation of Independent
Businesses, Coffey County
Chamber of Commerce.

STAFF

Publishers
Chris and Catherine Faimon

Managing Editor
Mark Petterson

Sports Reporter
Katie McMurray

Reporter
Ida Wilson

Advertising Consultant
Christina Stohs

Ad Design
Bradley Rice

Circulation Mgr./Classifieds
Denise Sibley
Katherine Austin

Distribution
John Knachel
Brenda Futrell

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscriptions must be paid
in advance. Rates include
applicable taxes.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:
Mail Delivery: Coffey
County, Westphalia and
Hartford, \$36/1 year;

Elsewhere in Kansas,
\$39/1 year;
Outside Kansas (in U.S.),
\$50/1 year.

Online subscription,
\$30/1 year.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Coffey County Republican encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to:
Coffey County Republican,
Drawer A,
Burlington, KS 66839;

or by email to
ccrepub@gmail.com

• We do not publish anonymous letters.
• We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the classifieds desk.

• Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style and legality. We will not publish attacks on individuals or businesses which do not pertain to public issues.
Please limit the length to 300 words.

Contact
The Republican
Phone: (620) 364-5325
Fax: (620) 364-2607
Email:
ccrepub@gmail.com
Mail letters to:
Coffey County Republican
Drawer A,
Burlington, KS 66839



2020 - the year in K-12 education

The COVID-19 pandemic overshadowed all K-12 education news for the year 2020. Teachers and administrators dealt with funding changes, abnormal enrollment trends, teacher and “sub” shortages, curricular and academic challenges, and student management both face-to-face and online.

Education Frontlines



John Schrock
Educator

Yet, some school boards and portions of the local government and public were more concerned with the baby-sitting function of school and impact on sports than on academic progress. Early in the spring, decisions had to be made without a full understanding of the new coronavirus, its mode of transmission, the extent it would sicken and kill across various age groups, its response to warmer or colder seasons and more. While a surge in science research overwhelmed the publishing process, our low level of overall science literacy meant that behaviors that should have been based on science were determined by economics, politics and variable leadership.

At the K-12 level, it soon became evident that early elementary students were less likely to suffer severe symptoms. But for a few youngsters, a new Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is a serious inflammation of the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. As of December 4, the CDC reported 1,288 children had MIS-C and 23 died. As of this date, we still do not know the extent young children, who are often asymptomatic, harbor and transfer the virus to classmates and particularly to older school staff.

Older students ramp up to the higher

rates of adult symptomatic infection, making the decisions on high school policy different from elementary schools. Students lacking symptoms, including fever, make taking temperatures at entrances less effective.

Original mitigation efforts assumed the full range of washing hands, wiping down furniture, etc. But over time, data indicate that transmission by droplets and especially the invisible aerosols breathed out during talking, singing and cheering remain suspended for some time are a major mode of transmission. This makes group sports, band, orchestra and choral singing especially dangerous.

Research soon showed a clear protection provided by face masks in holding in outgoing aerosols and reducing aerosol intake — protection for both the wearer and others. Worries that young students would resist wearing a mask were not realized; many were eager to wear the often decorated masks. Of course, accommodations were needed for students with asthma and similar conditions.

Rapid dilution and dissipation of aerosols in outdoor air makes outdoor classes up to 17 times safer. Indoor classes with open windows and active circulation pulled that advantage indoors. Filtering indoor air through HEPA filters, similar to airliners, will be a major advantage too, but will require retrofitting school buildings over time.

Where schools went fully online, large numbers of K-12 students disappeared, estimated at over 600,000 nationwide. Some were homeless, living with a parent in a car or couch-surfing, where school classmates and teachers provided their only stability. Many students lacked sufficient internet connections. Education Week, the K-12 newspaper of record, runs massive ads by digital companies hawking

more expensive equipment and closing the “digital divide,” as the complete solution. But most students already possessing solid internet connections and laptops are falling behind.

Online testing has increased cheating, mainly by students “cooperating” to find answers. Grades have dropped. Academic standards now take a back seat to social-emotional concerns.

Measurement of the extent of learning loss varies from several months to the whole year, dependent on subject and the affluence of the school district. That also reflects the help from parents and others.

Face-to-face contact with teachers provided critical mandated reporting of suspected child abuse. With less teacher contact, abuse reports are down but the increased poverty and stress has undoubtedly increased unreported child abuse.

Schools had become an important source of nutrition under the free lunch program. With huge parent job losses, nearly one-third of our nation’s children are estimated to now be “food insecure.” Some schools use their buses to deliver meals. But the number of children served is now far less.

K-12 education relies on tax-based support. The tax shortfall is providing an excuse for increasing the number of unqualified “teachers” and substitutes to replace those who have left. Teachers still average nearly 20 percent less pay than others with comparable degrees, so our tax-based funding will turn around the small victories recently made in some states to increase teacher pay. More older teachers have left for early retirement. Surveys show 86 percent of those still in the classroom report low morale.

While vaccination may end the pandemic, these losses in learning will be with us for a generation.

2020 – the year in higher education

Higher education in America was already in trouble before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In the mid-1980s, most states supported more public university costs. Some states paid two dollars for every dollar a student paid in tuition toward instructional costs. Some state’s schools were more expensive, some nearly free. But less than half of high school graduates went to college. And minimum



John Schrock
Educator

ACT or SAT scores were required. Many graduated without school debt. By 2001, all states had moved to chasing student tuition. Some states essentially ended any tuition-assistance and were state universities in name only. Over 80 percent of high school graduates start a tertiary education (about 60 percent finish it). And student school debt today is enormous.

America’s lack of public support for education has been growing for four decades. The European Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development includes the U.S. in its assessment of high school students (PISA) and our students rank well

below most other developed countries. Indeed, as public universities jockey for tuition dollars, foreign students — and their higher out-of-state tuition — have become an important source of dollars to subsidize education of U.S. students. Half of U.S. post-doc students are foreign-born as are 29 percent of full-time STEM faculty.

Foreign student enrollment began to severely erode in 2017 due to restrictions on visas and stricter time-limits, especially for students from China. But this shift in attitude toward foreign students was felt

See **Schrock**, Page 7

Use your gift cards wisely

The holidays are upon us, the typical time for families and friends to gather to rekindle relationships and share traditions. However, as the events of the past year have taught us, 2020 is anything but typical or traditional, changing nearly every aspect of our lives. That includes how we celebrate the holidays in times of pandemic and social distancing.

The pandemic changed how Kansans shopped and prepared for the holidays when getting to the store was a challenge. In recent years, and certainly under the current circumstances, gift cards are a popular way for givers to make sure the recipient gets something he or she wants. If you unwrapped a gift card under your tree this year, now is your chance to choose your own perfect gift!

As you venture out to the stores or log on to your computer to spend that gift card, make sure you’re aware of the fine print that comes with your gift. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Under Kansas law, gift cards cannot expire for at least five years. If the gift card does not have an expiration date printed on the card, then it is good until you redeem it, no matter how long that is.
- Merchants can begin charging inactivity fees against the card’s balance 12 months after the card is issued. These fees are required to be printed on the card or the packaging it comes in.
- Pre-paid bank cards — the ones that are issued by a bank or credit card company, not by a specific store — can, and usually do, charge additional fees for purchasing the card, and on the balance.
- Be aware that even with legal protections in place, the value of a gift card may be lost if the store goes out of business before the card is used.

You should also remember to keep unused gift cards in a safe location. Treat them like cash. Unlike credit cards, if a gift card is lost or stolen, it can be difficult to prove the card belonged to you. Some retailers will allow you to register your card online, which protects the value of the card if something does happen.

If you happen to receive a card for a place you do not shop, it is unlikely that the retailer will let you exchange your card for cash. However, there are websites that allow you to sell or exchange your unwanted gift cards. Use caution when dealing with these online sites to be sure you don’t become a victim of fraud. You can also consider donating your unwanted gift cards to a local charity, especially cards for grocery, clothing or department stores.

For more consumer tips or to file a complaint, visit our consumer protection website at www.InYourCornerKansas.org or give us a call at (800) 432-2310.

A dog’s duties

Farm dogs hold a special place in the day-to-day operations of many family farms and ranches. For my family, our dog serves many important roles. Very quickly after our dog Rosie Bo was brought home to the farm as a tiny puppy, she assumed the role of head of farm security. Over the last few years, she has worked hard to ensure opossums avoid our porches, deer stay out of our yard, birds are made aware of a strict no fly zone near her human’s house, and all shadows of the night get a good barking.

Insight



Kim Baldwin
Kansas Farm Bureau

Although she has a huge, warm doghouse and a big barn full of hay, she has claimed a wicker chair on my front porch as her official post, which clearly allows her to remain on high patrol as she deems fit. I think she likes the spot because she not only can look over her territory, but she can also sit up and look into our living room to keep track of her humans.

Our girl Rosie Bo is fierce yet also the most loving and loyal pup you will ever find. She’ll try to destroy any wild animal that enters her domain, yet she tolerates her humans like only a saint would. Many days while my kids have been home during remote learning, I will look out my kitchen window during a recess break only to see Rosie Bo donning a few yards of fancy pink ruffles around her neck while running around the yard with the kids. It’s a style like that from the Elizabethan era and it is quite becoming of Her Majesty. Rosie Bo’s fashion is usually always styled by a 5-year-old little girl who loves digging through my fabric box and clearly has graduated from dressing her baby dolls to now accessorizing the farm dog.

More often than not this year, Rosie Bo has been allowed into the house to relax on the floor for a bit — usually in the absolute middle of any pathway traversed by her humans. I often wonder if she strategically places herself in these high-traffic areas in an attempt to trip her humans in the hopes they are carrying delicious morsels of food like Goldfish, string cheese or peanut butter sandwiches that she could help clean up.

While her taste in human food is quite sophisticated, Rosie Bo also fancies treasures she can enjoy after finding them while on patrol throughout the farm. She’s very proficient in searching our pastures and recovering deer bones that she then brings to my yard and gnaws on while lying in the sun. She’s also impressively good at sniffing out mummified pests like squirrels, raccoons and opossums and bringing them back to her wicker porch perch for safe keeping. I often wonder what runs through the mind of the UPS delivery guy when he makes deliveries to my house — never quite knowing what he’ll find when leaving a package by our door.

While our two kids have been home for remote school, Rosie Bo has become the third student in our learning environment. In the mornings, after she is allowed into the house, she’ll generally make a round through the kitchen to make sure there’s no cleanup work needed before she walks into one of the kids’ rooms to join a classroom Zoom meeting, listening to recitations of the alphabet by my daughter, and laying on the floor near my son as he works through his phonics lessons. Instead of gold stars, Rosie Bo generally knows she’s been a good pupil when she receives a special scratch behind her ear or on her belly and is told she’s a good dog.

As the final days of 2020 wrap up and a new year is ushered in, my guess is that Rosie Bo will continue with her essential responsibilities on the farm with little hesitation. After all, it’ll just be another day for our farm dog doing what she does so well.

—“Insight” is a weekly column published by Kansas Farm Bureau, the state’s largest farm organization whose mission is to strengthen agriculture and the lives of Kansans through advocacy, education and service.