

# Opinion

## Quote of the Day

*"One of the things that almost never works is secrecy — particularly in defense of dumbness."*

— Newt Gingrich, former speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, 1996

## Guest Editorial

# Sue the state

### Pile on: Lawsuits could be the answer to funding woes

Maybe Kansas public school districts are on to something after all. This idea of suing the state for what you want might catch on.

That is what some Kansas school districts did a few years back to capture more state dollars, and they are rallying the lawyers to go for it again. Thirty school districts — including Hutchinson USD 308 and some others in the area — belong to Schools for Fair Funding, which is building strength for another legal assault on the state.

Think it is strange state agencies now are suing the state to increase their budgets? Nah, when you think about it, this fits right in with the way we operate in America these days.

Not only are we a litigious society, but in general — whether on talk radio or newspaper Web site comments — we prefer to fight for our own political position rather than try to see the other side's perspective.

So, why not sue? Everyone should start doing this!

If the K-12 education system is going to sue, certainly the higher education system should not be left out. Board of Regents, you better get your lawyers ready, because the state is, after all, cutting your budget, too — by far more than K-12, in fact.

Never mind about the small matter of state government being in the direct financial straights probably since the Great Depression, apparently there is money for lawyers and lawsuits.

All state agencies need to be thinking about this. Everyone is getting cut, and it just isn't fair. And, after all, this is about the kids — and the poor, the disabled, the elderly and ... (insert unfairly treated interest group here).

So, the state's welfare agency should sue. The Department of Aging should sue.

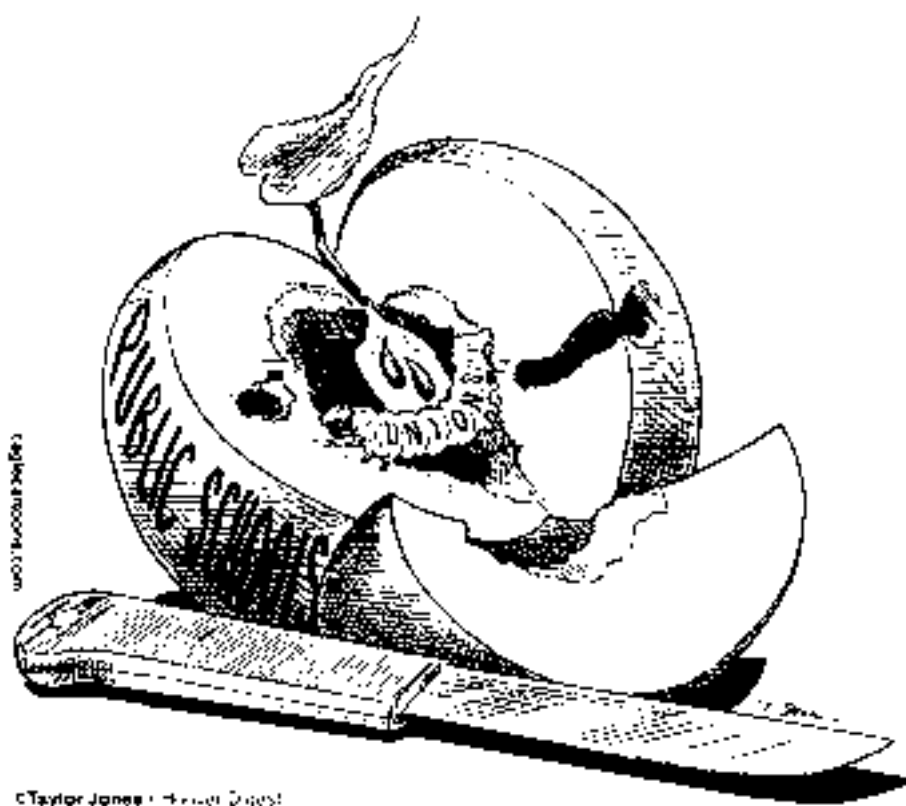
The prison system should sue to get its shuttered prison cells and boot camps reopened. The transportation department should sue for highways that aren't being fixed — and our local government should join if our highway isn't getting built.

The courts probably are going to have to start taking closure days because of budget cuts. They should sue. That would be interesting litigation.

Maybe we could shut down the Legislature and just have the courts sort out how much all the agencies should get. That would put legislators and lobbyists out of work. But, then, think of all the jobs for lawyers and judges.

And, just remember, it's all in the name of fairness — fair funding, you know.

— The Hutchinson News



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## AVID inspires hopes, dreams and goals

Leaders in education have an endless job and endless opportunities.

They have to be in the know about various curricula, methods and new ideas. They have to research and study which of these programs would best fit the needs of our students.

About two years ago, some middle and high school leaders heard about a program called AVID. They decided to visit some places it had been implemented. They were impressed and started to make plans to have an AVID program in OMS and OHS.

AVID is a nationally researched program that has been in existence for about 30 years. It is an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination. It is a program that targets potential first generation college students and then systematically trains a student to succeed in college and eventually complete college.

The administration and teachers decided to implement AVID this year in seventh grade and ninth grade. They used a set of standards to identify students who would qualify and who would be successful. They had the big task of reducing the 60 to 70 students who would qualify to 24 students for each class. Some of the qualifications were good attendance, good behavior, making fairly good grades on the assessments and good parental support.

AVID focuses on good note taking in the Cornell style. They use what is called the WICR approach: writing, inquiry, collaboration and reading. They learn to ask higher level questioning skills. They learn why

an answer is the answer and what makes that the answer.

AVID classes meet every day with Monday and Wednesday being the time to take notes, collaborate and working on building a sense of family. Thursday is lab time to use the skills they have studied the other days.

Friday is a team day. They may visit college classes or have former AVID students come in and talk to them. More than 200 colleges have sent information so the students can readily see what opportunities are out there.

I was fortunate to visit the seventh graders at OMS on a recent Thursday. They all had a common problem and were instructed to find an answer. They used a tutorial reflection paper to find it. Some of the students were sure they had never seen this question before but through collaboration they soon came up with ways to find the answer.

When Kyle Kiefer asked what a monomial was, immediately Alysian Lindberg was able to show the group and explain her answer. In this method the students were learn-

ing from each other, each bringing their knowledge to the whole group. In another group Krystal Dowd was listening to her college group leader explain what steps to take next so they could figure out the answer.

The college AVID tutors were interviewed and chosen from Baker University and Ottawa University. Each group of four or five students had an AVID tutor. They were using the Socratic method of questioning. This is answering a question with a question. The students were able to learn how to ask deep questions and collaborate to find out the answers.

It was a typical classroom, when I walked in, but soon I noticed the collaboration, the asking of questions and the support of others, which is not always typical in a regular classroom.

By learning the AVID method these students will have the doors open to them and over the next five years they will become aware of the reality they too can attend college and subsequently complete a coveted degree that was not even a thought six years ago.

OMS and OHS will extend the program each year until AVID will be available to students from sixth grade to 12th grade. This will enable many students to meet the AVID goal — the ability to attend and complete the college of their choice.

This is a very exciting addition to our schools. Wouldn't you agree?

Marge Stevens is an Ottawa School Board member.

MARGE STEVENS



Positives in Education

## Reader Forum

### Untruths by Felts

Doesn't anybody red pencil Tommy Felts? He seems to operate on the theory that the more you repeat a lie, the more people will believe it.

President Obama was born in the United States. Hawaii has been a part of America since Aug. 14, 1898. Obama was born after Hawaii became a state. He is an American. All five of my children were born in Honolulu and no one questions their

citizenship.

As to whether he is a Muslim ... who cares? He says he is a practicing Christian. He acts like one. And if he isn't, so what? The last time I checked, Islam was rooted in the same Judeo-Christian traditions so highly valued by most of our citizens, and the Constitution does not limit citizenship to Christians.

We have had presidents who were not outwardly religious and some who were, but we do not have a na-

tional religion.

Please back off, Felts. No more untruths in your rants.

— Margaret Wilson, Melvern

[Editor's note: Tommy Felts' Oct. 29 column, "Mr. President, you scare me," did not state that Felts believes Obama was born outside the United States, nor did it state that he believes the president is Muslim.]

## Where to Write

■ **President Barack Obama**, White House, Washington, D.C., 20500; (202) 456-1414; www.whitehouse.gov

■ **U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts**, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510-1605; (202) 224-4774. Online e-mail form: <http://roberts.senate.gov/public/>

■ **U.S. Sen Sam Brownback**, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; (202) 224-6521. Online e-mail form: <http://brownback.senate.gov/public/contact/emailsam.cfm>

■ **U.S. Rep. Lynn Jenkins**, 130 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. Phone: (202) 225-6601.

■ **Gov. Mark Parkinson**, Office of the Governor, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th Ave., Ste. 212S, Topeka, KS, 66612; (785) 296-3232. Online e-mail form: <http://www.governor.ks.gov/comments/comment.htm>

■ **State Sen. Pat Apple**, Room 242E, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612; (785) 296-7380. E-mail: [apple@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:apple@senate.state.ks.us)

■ **State Sen. Derek Schmidt**, Room 242E, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612; (785) 296-7380. E-mail: [schmidt@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:schmidt@senate.state.ks.us)

■ **State Rep. Tony Brown**, Room DSOB, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612;

(785) 296-7885. E-mail: [tony.brown@house.gov](mailto:tony.brown@house.gov)

■ **State Rep. Bill Feuerborn**, Room 322-S, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612; (785) 296-7697. E-mail: [feuerborn@house.state.ks.us](mailto:feuerborn@house.state.ks.us)

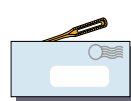
■ **State Rep. Willie Prescott**, Room DSOB, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612; (785) 296-6014. E-mail: [willie.prescott@house.ks.gov](mailto:willie.prescott@house.ks.gov)

■ **State Rep. Bill Otto**, Docking Room, Kansas State Capitol, Topeka, KS 66612; (785) 296-7636. E-mail: [otto@house.state.ks.us](mailto:otto@house.state.ks.us)

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