

Other Viewpoints

Cursive has place in education today

Debate continues in schools and beyond on the right way to write.

Cursive handwriting, still considered an important skill by many teachers, is thought to be outdated by others due to digital technology.

The Kansas State Board of Education was scheduled to take up the issue last week, and decide whether the state's new handwriting standards should encourage schools to make sure that fifth- and sixth-graders can write legibly in cursive.

Even though many young people used to computers and cell phone correspondence no doubt wonder why they'd even need such handwriting ability, a good number of educators rightly believe good penmanship shouldn't be erased from the old standards of reading, writing and arithmetic.

Studies have found that many teachers believe students with fluent handwriting produce written assignments that are easier to read, and better in quality. Educators have cause to believe students are more thoughtful when writing something long-hand, vs. hastily pecking away on a keyboard.

The art of cursive writing also promises to come in handy for students when they need to take notes. Even though a growing number of students have access to tablets and other digital devices in school, they won't always be able to use such devices for effective note-taking. It helps to put down notes in cursive because it's speedier and more efficient than printing.

Teachers also note that the ability to write in cursive will help students read various kinds of writing they may encounter. Historical documents, for example, would be more difficult to decipher without some familiarity with cursive writing.

Among other more practical reasons for students to learn cursive would be that as they move into adulthood, they'll encounter a number of legal documents that require a signature.

While we don't ever expect to see writing on paper eclipse the growing use of text messaging and other forms of electronic communication, good penmanship still warrants attention in today's curriculum.

Educators know that regardless of technological advances that make some things easier, the art of handwriting won't go out of style. We'd expect the state board of education to acknowledge as much.

— *The Garden City Telegram, via the Associated Press*

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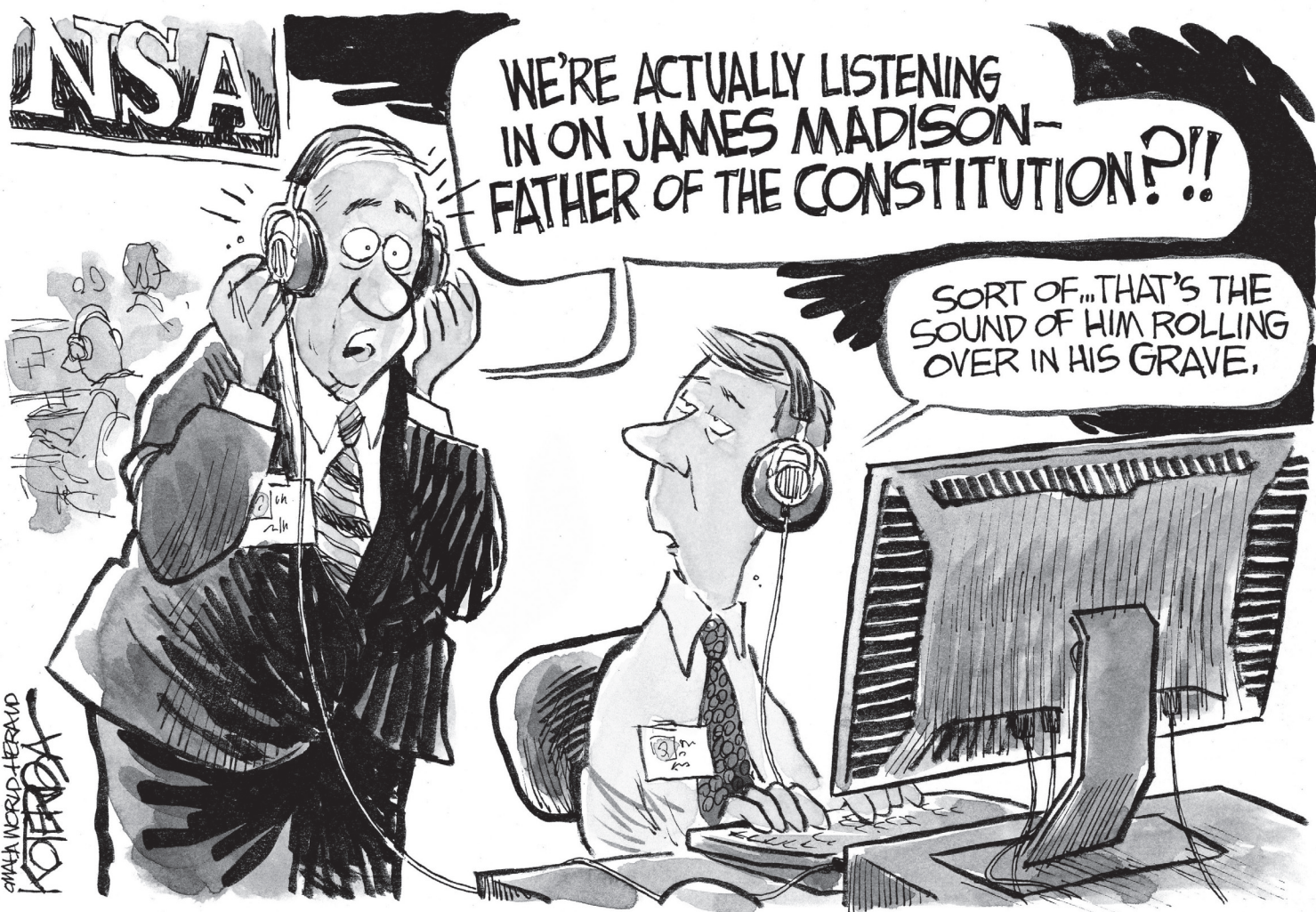
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Don't ask the directionally-challenged

I'm done taking directions from my eldest daughter. From either of them, in fact.

I thought after living in Georgia for a dozen years, she knew her way around. But that was before she got me lost not once, but twice, on a single expedition.

Oh, we got where we were going. We weren't even that late. But I realized that I'd known where I was going, and I don't even live in Georgia.

Don't get me wrong. Both of my daughters are bright, intelligent young women with good careers, well respected by their peers. I just have to remember they are related to their mother.

And anyone who knows Cynthia knows she has a lot of common sense, but no sense of direction. She makes up for it by going around the block a lot. Her record for a block is about 50 miles on a side, by the way, but she did get home that same day.

She always gets where she is going. So do the girls. But taking directions from them, well, that's not something I recommend.

We started out Thursday afternoon to take Taylor, our 3 1/2-year-old granddaughter, to the zoo in Columbia, S.C., which is about an hour from her home near Augusta, Ga.

Cynthia and I met Taylor's mom, our younger daughter Lindsay, at work and picked up the kid seat and a backpack full of supplies a toddler might need — milk, snacks, wipes, toys, potty seat, a change of clothes, plus the instructions: be sure she goes potty before you leave school. Be sure she goes potty before you leave the zoo.

You get the picture.



Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

We picked up Felicia, who was having a bad day at work, then went to get Taylor. I found my way to suburbs just fine, then I made my first mistake:

"I turn right up here, right?"

"No, daddy, turn left." "You sure?" "I'm sure."

Well, who am I to argue with a girl who's sure?

But after going left for a couple of miles, I was pretty sure we'd missed the preschool. I turned back, found the school where I thought it'd been, and we got Taylor. Getting Taylor out of class would make a whole other column, but there's not time here. She proudly told all her friends she was going to the zoo.

And here, I have to admit, I did miss my turn for the freeway. Felicia chided me, but I knew two ways to get to it. We got to the zoo with an hour of daylight, and Taylor ran from animal to animal, ohing and ahing.

After Taylor said it was time to go home, we got back to the freeway. Felicia said to go through town and take Highway 1 out of town so we could stop at a Sonic. Taylor wanted a shake. I nodded, drove east.

"Where do I turn?"

"Just keep going."

"Here." "No." "Next bridge." "No, I think you keep going."

Only that was taking us out of town to the east, and I knew better. Made a U turn. Started south. Pretty soon, I was convinced it was the wrong road. When we passed under a rail line and then by the regional airport I knew we were lost. By the time the four-lane boulevard turned into a two-lane track, so did Felicia. She consulted her iPhone.

"It says we turn right on Boiling Springs Road in 9.2 miles," she said.

And I knew that was at least in the general direction we needed to go, toward the freeway home.

Meantime, we were getting farther and farther away from town and farther into the country and — we missed Boiling Springs Road, got off on Highway 6 instead. Not to worry; the iPhone sent us down Bethany Church Road instead, back to Boiling Springs. You gotta love southern road names.

And if that has you confused, then join the crowd. Each road got narrower and darker and more winding than the last, until we reached Highway 34, and that led to I-20 and back to Augusta.

We made it home. We weren't even late.

But next time, I'm taking my Garmin and not listening to any daughter directions. They're sweet, but I've learned my lesson.

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.

Optimism marks ag across the pond

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) still face challenges within the European Union; however, one Irish wheat farmer is optimistic change is on the way.

"With this challenge of feeding the world, we must embrace technology," says John Dardis, who farms approximately 30 miles south of Dublin in Kildare County.

The challenge will be for farmers to double food production by 2050 to feed an estimated 9 billion mouths, Dardis told nearly 1,000 farmers and ranchers at Kansas Farm Bureau's annual meeting the first week in December.

Originally the Dardis family raised beef cattle. Recently, John has moved exclusively to raising wheat, barley and oats. He is a fifth-generation farmer and serves as First Secretary of Agriculture and Food with the Embassy of Ireland in Washington.

While the European Union clings to studies that say western European consumers do not want bio technology used in their food, Dardis contends this attitude is changing.

The United Kingdom's Prime Minister, David Cameron, recently talked about the shift in the U.K.'s attitude towards this technology. Cameron emphasized the importance of fostering a "pro-science" culture and said he's ready to call on the E.U. to relax its stifling restrictions on biotechnology.

"There's also a vigorous scientific effort on behalf of the European Food Safety Authority to ensure the proper scientific overview is given to GMOs," Dardis says. "When you look at the facts they conclude biotech is safe."

As a wheat breeder, Dardis is convinced that ultimately food products will all post la-



John Schlageck

• Insights

Kansas Farm Bureau

bels saying whether or not they are genetically modified. Then the consumer will have the opportunity to decide what she wants to buy, he says.

Another challenge the Irish farmer said his countrymen continue to face is the inability to use growth promoters with beef cattle. This means more time and expense to ready their livestock for market.

"We have a wonderful resource in our native grasses, but we have to feed our cattle silage and protein for another three to four months to finish them off," Dardis says.

Ireland exports nearly 90 percent of its beef, mainly in the European Union. Irish-produced beef is a close second on the grocery shelf running only behind domestic beef raised throughout western Europe, according to Dardis.

"While I prefer the grass-fed beef of Ireland, a good steak is a good steak wherever you have it in this world," he says.

Dardis is also excited about the prospects of dairy in his home country. Irish dairy farmers have been restricted by a quota for many years.

In the early '80s Irish dairymen were exporting milk on par with New Zealand, Dardis recalls. New Zealand has expanded its dairy exports threefold since then and Ireland now

lags far behind.

"We're excited that in 2015, the quota will be removed from dairy," the Irish farmer says. "We have plans to grow our dairy exports by 50 percent and rank in the top five in the coming years."

Today Ireland imports milk from other countries and adds value to this raw product and then exports it as infant formula and finished cheeses.

Wrapping up his comments to the farmers and ranchers from across Kansas, Dardis told them to be, "proud of what you do."

"Farmers and ranchers on both sides of the Atlantic are increasingly under pressure from outside our world," he says. "The natural reaction is to go into your shell and back to what you do and not put the facts on the table."

"You are feeding the world," Dardis says. "That's not rhetoric. Be proud of this and mold the discussion. Don't stay away from it."

John Schlageck of the Kansas Farm Bureau is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. He grew up on a diversified farm near Seguin, and his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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• Bruce Tinsley

