

Our View

115  
Book smart

Good reading skills  
require team effort.

A startling new report shows two of every three Kansas fourth-graders are not proficient readers.

The report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Early Warning: Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters," revealed more troubling trends:

- Among low-income children in Kansas, 78 percent of fourth-graders scored below proficient reading level.

- Forty percent of Kansas children age 3 to 5 were not enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten.

- Ten percent of Kansans ages 18 to 24 were not attending school, not working and had a high school diploma or less.

Studies show reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a key indicator of whether a child will graduate from high school and reach his or her full earning potential

Kansas Action for Children, a nonprofit,

nonpartisan organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families, released the report in a "call to action" for the state.

Moving forward, one of the report's worthwhile recommendations is development of an early care and education system coordinated with the first years of grade school.

Thankfully, Kansas lawmakers wrangling with serious budget issues acknowledged the need to protect



**Reading is a crucial skill that needs to be learned. What do you think can be done to improve reading levels? Do you have tips to improve reading comprehension and speed? Talk about it at SWKTalk.com.**

early education programs from deep cuts — and, in doing so, cast votes for the future of the state's youngsters.

Still, there's much work to do. The chal-

lenge of making students better readers is nothing new in diverse Garden City USD 457, which has unique challenges in meeting reading requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Considering such challenges, work on reading skills also must be a year-round endeavor.

Summer learning programs make a difference. Locally, Books on the Bus (BOB) provides children's books in Garden City and Holcomb during summer break, and library reading programs also help.

Parents should see to it that their children take advantage of as many resources as possible.

The goal of making sure children are proficient in reading and prepared to succeed must be tackled from multiple fronts. Only through educators, parents and legislators working together will the state get children's reading skills back on track.

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Garden City,KS  
Circ. 7895  
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