

If you've noticed the recent ads in the Salina Journal concerning Abilene's reading scores, you may have some concerns. Please let me explain that what appears to be informative journalism, is actually an ad that is sponsored by the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and The Kansas Policy Institute. In my opinion, it is a political attack on public education.

The ad infers that only 40% of Abilene's juniors are reading at grade level. Please let me explain why that statement is misleading.

Adequate Yearly Performance (AYP) is the term the state uses to show whether or not a school or district has made sufficient annual progress toward a 100% reading goal. There are five proficiency levels: 47.1% of AHS students scored at the "Meets Expectations" level, 25.6% hit the "Exceeds Expectations" level, and 15.7% earned an "Exemplary" rating. The total of these three positive scores indicate that almost 90% of AHS juniors are meeting the AYP level. In other words, the previously mentioned ad failed to mention one of the three AYP scores.

However, I am also well aware that 5% of our students received what is termed "Academic Warning" and 5% scored at the "Does Not Meet Expectation" level. Therefore, we are working to make this percentage even better through a systematic K-12 Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). For example, (refer to the photo depicting one specific classroom and explain a little about what they are doing -- for example, if the photo depicted a strategy being used in an elementary classroom, we could include a statement of what this does to help achieve reading success.)

And finally, it's important to remember that tests give teachers only part of the picture of a child's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers combine the results of many methods to gain insights into the skills, abilities, and knowledge of the children they teach.

Reading is an important priority in our school system and is an important part of our overall mission--To help all students become successful and responsible lifelong learners in a changing world.