

A joy for parents can be found in a daughter's macaroni mural. A first grade boy becomes a finger-painting Picasso. Pictures adorn the walls of a child's bedroom. As the year passes, however, the refrigerator doors become barren and the drawings no longer embellish the room. With the cuts to the funds of education in Kansas impacting teachers, students of every grade are feeling the repercussions. As teachers lose their jobs, students lose their fundamentals for education, the guidance needed to learn new concepts.

In relation to Council Grove, KNEA president Blake West said they "had very few art teachers in the district. When one of the art teachers retired, they weren't filling any positions. They did not have enough money to have as many teachers this year as they did last year. What this meant was that they eliminated art in their elementary schools."

Education is one of the cuts being made to the budget due to the deficit.

"We cannot cut our way out of the budget problem we have today because it would take \$380 million in cuts and the budget director gave us a list where these cuts would be proposed from," Topeka Senator Anthony Hensley said. "Number one on this list is \$187 million that would come out of K-12 education."

While Kansas has, for the most part, maintained a steady budget, history is being created while the recession impacts the country.

"The governor will tell you that for the first time in the history of Kansas, we have had a downturn in our budget for the last four years," Hensley said. "Prior to that, we've never had two years in a row where we had less money being brought in from the year before."

With the minimal amount of money, everything has to stay open to discussion to find a solution to the problem.

"There are some folks that want to specifically exempt the K-12 from the discussion and what we've said is that everything should be on the table, everything that the state of Kansas funds," vice president of the Kansas chapter of Americans for Prosperity Alan Cobb said. "You can't take 50% or more than 50% of the budget off the table before you start evaluating what should be cut and what shouldn't be cut."

All aspects of the budget are being cut, some more than others.

"To take all of public education or all of K-12 off the table doesn't make a whole lot of sense," Cobb said. "There's a number of things that the state of Kansas funds that should be immediately

eliminated during these tough times. Support for public television, public radio, things like that. That will only go as far as filling in the gaps.”

Some legislators have opinions that electives are simply that, an elective that can be cut from a budget. Other people, however, feel that those electives make up the education needed.

“Not every student connects with math as their favorite subject or English as their favorite subject and if we want to be able to motivate students, we need to make sure that our curriculum is connecting with the broad range of interests and talents that our students have,” West said.

Education is a lifestyle. Though cuts are being made to the funding of public education, it is education that built the state of Kansas.

“Our founding fathers came from the east coast to the Midwest and knew that education was essential. They built schools before they even established towns, First Lady of the State of Kansas Stacy Parkinson said.

In the opinion of some, schooling is the building blocks of the future and is a right to those who want access to it.

“It is essential in any society that values liberty to educate its citizens in order to preserve freedom,” Parkinson said. “Fundamental to any free society is the right of its citizens to have free and open access to information and education. Without those freedoms, democracy cannot persist.”