

By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

I sat through the school board meeting earlier this month when the Reading Mastery Program used in grades K-6 was a major topic of discussion.

Bottom line, while it appears the expensive program may be helping a number of students improve their individual skills and outlook concerning reading, Chase County Schools' students aren't making adequate progress in state reading scores according to the Department of Education.

The program, now in its fourth year here, has been controversial, to say the least.

To fit the extra time required for the program into the school day initially, it meant less time teaching some other subjects, such as science.

Some parents complained about that, and rightly so. School administrators and teachers made efforts to ease those concerns.

It's apparently a rigid program and one that required additional money to bring in consultants to help implement it and work with staff on follow-up.

But when it comes down to state scores, CCS students are not keeping up.

Part of the issue is the state continues to "up the bar" in what they expect in Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) by individual grade levels. Some of the grade levels are showing yearly improvement, but not enough to make the state happy.

So, school officials are looking at something different, maybe another program.

Reading and comprehension, like writing, are so important for success in all other subject areas. It's vital that our kids can read to be successful as they move on in life.

One way parents can help is to make reading a priority at home.

It's much easier for parents to just let the kids turn on the TV or the computer. But, why not require 15-30 minutes of reading time each day at home from books your child has selected?

Something needs to change here, or our kids are going to be the losers. The school cannot be expected to be the only teachers of our children. Most parents likely do not expect that, but they can be a huge influence at home by their own actions with regard to reading.

Like at school, reading should be a priority at home, too.