

SPARK goal is a good one

It is easy to point out flaws in a system, but challenging to put yourself on the line to fix it.

Take, for example, the ongoing problem of children's readiness — or lack of readiness — to attend school, a problem deeply rooted in the socioeconomic realities of our area. Children who enter kindergarten developmentally behind their peers have a difficult time getting good grades and passing federal- and state-mandated achievement tests. The problem becomes acute when they reach middle school and high school, and many may never catch up.

Identifying the problem is easy. Fixing it is not.

Enter state Sen. Kirk Schuring, R-Jackson Twp., who inserted an amendment into the state budget to provide \$200,000 to fund a program designed to help kids attain readiness before starting kindergarten, and the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, both of whom financially support a five-year initiative to provide activities and tutoring for area kids at risk. Interventions are tracked, and early results appear promising. The program is called SPARK Ohio, and it was featured on our front page Monday.

While we support the SPARK goal of improving the number of third-graders who pass the state achievement test, we are even more excited that the program is identifying kids early and intervening before they get to school, fall behind, and grow frustrated and disillusioned. Creating lifelong learners is an achievement that goes far beyond ensuring that they pass one test, and the dividends it will pay for kids and our community are immeasurable.

We salute Schuring, the Sisters of Charity, W.K. Kellogg and area schools for not only identifying a problem, but also working together to create a possible solution.
