

from our viewpoint...

New technology costly for schools

Computers and wireless communication are the technology of today — and the future.

This is not some fad that will fade away. We need to see that our kids have the training to take advantage of that future.

The concept of the Goodland School’s “One-to-One” plan — to have a laptop computer for each high school student to use at school and at home — was on the right track, though the price tag was too high for the school board to swallow.

The program would cost over half a million dollars, and both school board members and teachers felt it was too much too fast.

A committee put together to look at the program recommended the district look at ways to increase the number of computers, buying laptops rather than desktop computers from now on with one-to-one as the goal within four to five years.

Results of surveys about the computer program show lukewarm support from the students, and a larger negative from the teaching staff.

A high percentage of both students and teachers say they have a computer at home with Internet access, and use these and the computers at school several hours a week.

Everyone was looking at the cost of buying enough laptop computers for every high school student, though, and not at how effectively they could be used in the classroom.

At the high school, three-fourths of the students turned in the survey, and of that group, 92 percent said there was a computer in their home. Of those with a computer at home, 85 percent said they had access to the Internet.

High school teachers given the same questions indicated 88 percent had computers and Internet at home. When asked if they supported the computer project, 53 percent said no, 24 percent said yes and 23 percent were undecided or left the question blank.

Grade school and junior high teachers, whose students wouldn’t get their own computers, at least at first, were less even less enthusiastic about the plan.

Comments at a one-to-one committee meeting showed the teaching staff feels they need more training on computers.

People suggested the district take available technology money and upgrade the system to be more mobile with the use of portable computers, wireless servers a specialist who can work with the teachers to expand the use of computers in the classroom. Some classes do a good job of using the technology now, but it is clear that the teaching staff has a long way to go to be computer literate.

The laptop initiative is a good idea. Time and technology are marching faster than even the computer junkies can keep up.

High school students who graduate next month will find a world full of computers and be expected to be able to use them, in college or on the job.

Today’s kids know more about using a computer than their parents or teachers, and that is good. However, there is always something new to learn.

The goal should be to increase the number and the use of computers in classrooms throughout the district. That means more money for computers, and more computer learning for teachers. — Tom Betz

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Designer Social Security

By Dick Morris

President Bush’s job-approval rate is slipping again. One reason is likely his failure to sell his Social Security reform.

The problem has always been that the president only tells us half the story. He warns us that the system is failing and trumpets the virtues of privatization, but doesn’t propose any solution to the core problem: the shortfall in the system’s revenues.

Only by addressing this core question can he win the credibility to go on to the further diversion of revenues implicit in privatization.

But how to cut Social Security and live to tell about it? The key is choice. Lots and lots and lots of individual choice.

Call it “Designer Social Security” — create a system that gives us each options that let us create a system that is right for us.

We are all adults. We get the point that the Social Security system can’t pay us the benefits now on the books with the revenues slated to flow in during the coming decades. We know that something has got to give. That’s why we are hesitant to buy into privatization in the first place, at least until Bush explains how he will solve the basic problems.

So offer us options. For example:

Option A — No increase in taxes. No change in the retirement age. A cut in benefits.



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• commentary

Option B — No increase in taxes. A later retirement age. The current level of benefits.

Option C — An increase in taxes. No change in retirement age. The current level of benefits. (For those who can document higher income levels, there could be a further option of an increase in the ceiling of taxation or a raise in the rate.)

Throw the Bush choices into the mix — private investments in exchange for an added tax hike, benefit cut or increased retirement age.

The extent of the various changes should all be calibrated to achieve the central goal: solvency for Social Security.

By giving us options, we are being treated as adults, able to make our own choices. The congressional Republicans have “ruled out” a tax increase. But maybe we want one in order to get the current level of benefits. The AARP may oppose any cut in benefits or delay in the retirement age, but we may prefer that to an increase in taxes.

Give us our choices. Let us make the decision.

Evolution debate has many sides

To the Editor:

In a recent editorial by Steve Haynes about the evolution debate that is going on with our state Board of Education, I wish to agree with Steve that it is showing intolerance on the side of the evolutionists. But, as a retired science teacher and member of the state Science Standards Committee, I wish to express several major issues that Steve left out.

First, there is now significant scientific evidence that seems to refute Darwinian evolution, but that is left out of public school science courses, even in college.

Critical thinking is an important and established part of scientific thought, but being critical about Darwinian evolution is not permitted. Most high school teachers have been so indoctrinated by the evolutionists that they do not know that these evidences exist.

First, there is a law in physics called the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that, in a natural setting, things go from the organized to the disorganized, from a state of order to a state of disorder. But, the theory of evolution requires that somehow that process go in reverse.

How long would it take for silicon and other elements to sit around on the ground until a Pentium computer was spontaneously constructed by nature? There are many situations when carbon dating and other forms of radiation dating produce results that contradict the theory of evolution, but they throw those results out as invalid.

In 1973, Dr. Richard Leakey found a skull in Africa that dated way before the time that man was supposed to have been “evolved onto



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readers

• to the editor

earth,” so they just threw the evidence out because it did not match their theory of evolution.

These people religiously hold on to their theory, and work to force the “scientific research” to match their theory. DNA has a motor in it that is so complex that it could not have evolved, because it would have been needed to be complete at the very beginning of life that depended on DNA. More evidences can be found at these websites, www.icr.org, www.creationdesign.org, www.answersingenesis.org.

All of this brings up another issue. Religion is predicated upon a personal philosophy regarding who are we, where we come from, and where we are going. Some religions are deistic, like Christianity and the Islam, others are atheistic or agnostic.

Our stand on evolution and intelligent design

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