

from our viewpoint...

# What do we expect from our schools?

The Kansas debate about evolution and intelligent design is making headlines all around the world, but what are we doing to our schools seems more important.

The theory of evolution Charles Darwin first proposed in his book “The Origin of Species” published in 1859 will survive attacks by those who feel it ignores the premise there is a divine creator.

People have been throwing religion and the divine creator at Darwin’s theory for 146 years. That’s OK. In a scientific forum, there should be attempts to prove and to disprove any theory.

Attempts to prove Darwin’s premise of natural selection have fallen short. While it’s widely accepted, it’s full of holes. The same can be said for attempts to disprove the premise. This leaves things close to the same point they were 146 years ago when Darwin first published his findings.

Today, people are using “intelligent design” in an attempt to dislodge the theory of evolution from the Kansas classrooms. This is the second time in less than eight years Kansas has been held up around the world as an example of revisionism run wild.

The evolution debate is part of the underlying question about what we expect schools to do for or to our kids.

Most of the founding fathers believed education was important for the country, but they did not start the country with a free public education system. There is no mention of education in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights. It was not until 1918 that all states had a mandatory school attendance.

Massachusetts was the first state, in 1827, to require towns of 500 or more to have a high school, and the first state with a Board of Education, established in 1837.

Throughout the nation’s history, continuing to the last few years, there has been debate about the free public education system and whether private schools should get money either directly or through a voucher system.

That debate, like the one on evolution, will not likely be settled in the manner either side wants.

What kids should learn and how they learn is another historical debate. We remember the phonics debate of the 60s, and count ourselves lucky to have had phonics in our early reading classes. We did miss the “new math” program, but had trouble helping our daughters who faced this revision of education.

Today there is pressure on the schools to prove they have educated the kids through standardized tests, or face the loss of federal money. No Child Left Behind is the latest attempt to legislate education standards.

Some believe the standards are creating a minimum set of requirements that signal a “dumbing down” rather than a real attempt to reach for excellence. Some parents feel having their kids meet the minimum requirements is proof the schools are doing a better job.

At the end of the 13 years of the basic education process, we hope our kids can read (with understanding), write (or type with today’s computerized society) and do arithmetic (basic addition, subtraction multiplication and division).

It would be a bonus if they could think independently, and that might be more important than the views they learn on evolution. — Tom Betz

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# Fishing is fun; even on tough days

I got to go fishing the other day. It was great. OK, it was a tough day.

The sun was shining, the sky was bright, but the shadows were already down on the canyon.

I fell in the creek, lost my pole and bruised some ribs.

But worse things could happen.

Like not going fishing.

I like to fish. It’s relaxing and fun, and sometimes you catch something.

I like fishing in Kansas. You sit on the bank, or on the dock, and watch your bobber. If you’re lucky, and the fish are biting, you catch some crappies. Maybe a bass or a couple of walleye.

But on a soft summer evening, with the sun setting and the water warm and inviting to your toes, what better thing to do?

The dock is especially good if there’s a baseball game on the radio.

It helps if the fish are biting, but it’s not required.

I like deep sea fishing. There’s drama and sport in finding the fish, a tuna or marlin or dorado.

A lot of days, you don’t catch much. But the sun is warm and the boat might stir up a school of porpoise. Whales might jump. A marlin might bite.

steve haynes

- along the sappa

Last week, though, I was fly fishing for trout in the warm autumn sun.

It should have been a perfect day, even if I got out a little late. The fish were biting, and I was just letting them go.

I was there to watch them rise to the fly, strike and run. To see them fight and flash in their shiny glory

And watch them swim away.

You don’t have to keep fish to have fun. When they’re spawning in the fall, it’s better for you and for them to let them go.

Then I came to the big hole, dammed up by some big rocks.

They looked solid.

I stepped up and started to cast.

And the rocks moved. I tried to balance, but to no avail.

I went one way. My pole went the other.

I landed in the creek, on some rocks.

My chest hit first, and when I got up I could feel it.

Not broken, probably, but you could tell it would be sore.

My pole was nowhere to be seen, and I started to figure out how I’d explain to Cynthia that I needed a new fly rod at, what, \$250 or \$300?

I thought I’d better look around.

It wasn’t downstream.

I came back to the big hole, a four-foot aspen rod in hand, and started fishing.

I can’t tell you how glad I was when that pole came up.

Then, I figured, since I was all wet, I’d better get back to the car before hypothermia set in.

There were a couple of holes in the way, and I caught two more fish.

See. It wasn’t such a bad day.

I had my pole, nine fish on the scorecard and the cliffs in the late evening light, those were spectacular.

What’s a few bruises and some wet clothes compared to that?

It was great.

I guess you have to love fishing to understand.

# Christmas Story won’t be displayed this year

To the Editor:

For the past 16 years, the City of Goodland has been treated to an extraordinary display of the Christmas Story diorama on the grounds of the Goodland Regional Medical Center. The diorama was the result of three talented and dedicated artists, Jeanette Foust, Maxine Rauscher, and Connie Hatcher, who put in thousands of hours painting the numerous scenes depicting the story of Christmas.

Over the past 16 years, hundreds of people have driven the route around the hospital to gaze in amazement at the larger-than-life figures and read the story of the birth of Christ. For the past 16 years, the erection, removal and storage of the diorama has been carried out by the Goodland Rotary Club with the assistance of students from the Northwest Kansas Technical College.

from our readers

- to the editor

number of pieces available, the Rotary Club decided that the display will not be erected this Christmas season.

The Goodland Christmas Story diorama is a true treasure in need of considerable repair. It will cost thousands of dollars to rebuild and repaint the scenes. The cost to bring the diorama back to its original condition is far beyond the financial means of the club.

The club has regretfully decided to put aside

its involvement with the Christmas Story diorama until an individual, our community or a foundation can raise the money and manpower necessary to rebuild this community treasure and restore it to its original condition.

Ron Lucas, president  
Goodland Rotary Club

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To the Editor:

I would like to say a million thanks to the gentlemen who worked so hard Sunday and Monday to restore our power.

I really appreciate your work.

It was your job, but you went beyond that. May you be blessed for all you have done.

Inez de Plata  
Goodland

## Letter Policy

The Goodland Star-News encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, and must include a telephone number and a signature. Unsigned letters will not be published. Form letters will be rejected, as will letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and good taste. We encourage letters, with address and phone numbers, by e-mail to: [star-news@nw-kansas.com](mailto:star-news@nw-kansas.com).

## garfield