



Critical Thinking

Scott Huckaby's Toastmaster CTM #2

Delivered on February 20, 2003

Speaking with Sincerity... Objectives:

- To convince the audience of my earnestness, sincerity and conviction on a subject I thoroughly understand.
- To confront and control my nervousness.
- Time: Five to Seven minutes

Notes the Toastmaster should use in the introduction:

- The audience should assume the role of the Needville School board.
- By way of credentials, Scott Huckaby is an Electrical Engineer, he has had a successful career in high technology and has also been a taxpayer in the Needville ISD for 15 years.

Mr. Toastmaster, fellow toastmasters, and members of the School Board... I come before you today to appeal for a change in our science curriculum to help our children learn critical thinking.

There is a storm brewing over teaching evolution in our schools. I'm here today to help you see a practical way to address this controversy. I'm not here to say that we should stop teaching evolution. Indeed the concepts of evolution are so ingrained into our society, there is no way to avoid it. Instead, I'm here to advocate the teaching of intelligent design along side evolution.

I will begin by explaining why teaching critical thinking is important. Then I'll explain what intelligent design is and conclude by addressing the separation of church and state.

The most valuable thing we can teach our children about science is how to use their minds to sort through the evidence supporting conflicting theories to arrive at the best conclusion. What we

are doing today by only teaching evolution is giving them one side of a controversial issue and forcing them to blindly accept it. By teaching intelligent design along side evolution, we can challenge students to determine for themselves which perspective is best aligned with the data. This trains them to use their minds to think critically. The skill of critical thinking has application in more than academics and is even more fundamental than reading.

Those who do not have a scientific back ground generally do not realize that evolution is only a theory. People were quick to embrace evolution because it allowed them to disregard any moral authority. I'd love to point out all the scientific problems with the theory of evolution but time does not permit.

Intelligent Design is a scientific theory that intelligent causes are responsible for the origin of the universe, life and its diversity. It holds that design is empirically detectable in nature, and particularly in living systems. Intelligent Design is an intellectual movement that includes a scientific research program for investigating intelligent causes and that challenges naturalistic explanations of origins.

For example, Intelligent Design explains why irreducible complexity is observed in all life forms. If living systems developed through a series of mutations, you'd expect to have a lot of useless, do-nothing characteristics. This is not what we have. In fact, if you take an organ like the eye and remove any part of it, it would not work. The eye has no non-critical components. The eye is a complex organ yet it its complexity

can not be reduced in any way or it would not work.

Intelligent design is gaining proponents in the scientific community as well as mainstream America. In a recent Zogby poll, 71% of Americans agree that *“biology teachers should teach Darwin’s theory of evolution, but also the scientific evidence against it”*; while only 15% say, *“biology teachers should teach only Darwin’s theory of evolution.”*

The decision to teach intelligent design alongside evolution is not a wild hair idea that is without precedent. In February, 2001, the state of Kansas approved a provision allowing intelligent design to be taught along side evolution in their schools. Perhaps you will recall the press coverage of this. What was not widely reported on was a similar such decision unanimously made by the Ohio State Board of Education in December, 2002.

All states are going to have to deal with this issue. I expect you can imagine which way the decision will go here in Texas. This presents the Needville School Board with a classic opportunity to show leadership and act now before state authorities beat you to the punch and get the credit for bringing critical thinking to Needville.

Teaching intelligent design is not the same as teaching Creation so it does not risk the separation of church and state. Intelligent design is not a religion any more than evolution is a religion. Intelligent design does not attempt to describe the intelligence that designed us, it leaves that up to the individual to fill in those details. People accepting intelligent design have the flexibility to believe that the intelligence behind the design is the God of the Bible, some impersonal force, Mother Earth, or even aliens for that matter.

Another consideration is that teaching evolution alone leads people to lose their moral compass. Our kids aren’t stupid. They can draw a logical conclusion from the view that says they were

descended from apes. This makes people no different than animals and therefore free to act no different than animals. When confronted with a conflict between their conscience and an emotion-driven impulse, people who are conditioned to act like animals will abandon any critical thinking and go with whatever feels good for the moment.

I grew up in the ‘60s when it was unheard of to have school children who were mass murders or who delivered a baby at their prom, discarded it, and went back to dancing. We wonder why things are different today. Evolution teaches our kids that there is no moral authority and thus no sanctity of life. We need to get back to teaching our kids to exercise their reasoning ability or, as bad as it is now, our society’s crisis will get worse.

Those who advocate teaching only evolution are social engineers with a political agenda to dumb-down our children. These social engineers don’t want us to teach critical thinking because they believe children who grow up letting the government and media do their thinking for them can be controlled by the government and media. But this rationalization is flawed and we have already seen it bear a bitter fruit.

In summary, I challenge the Needville School Board to be leaders and reject the politically correct counsel of the social engineers. Instead, let’s teach our kids to exercise critical thinking by adding intelligent design to the science curriculum alongside evolution.

Mr. Toastmaster...