Sisters High School biology teacher fired amid controversial curriculum

by Alisha Wilson

Board member releases teacherâ€™s powerpoint presentation; says it was a â€œcalculated decision on his part to bend young mindsâ€•

Kris Helphinstine, a part-time biology teacher at Sisters High School was fired by the school board Monday night for deviating from the curriculum on the theory of evolution after only eight days on the job, four of which were spent teaching his own theories of evolution through a PowerPoint presentation that referenced Nazi Germany and Planned Parenthood.

When asked why Helphinstine was dismissed, school board chairman Mike Gould said, â€œHe lacked judgment in departing from the district science curriculum in a very controversial subject area and this departure occurred without any consultation or without an appropriate supervisor. This is a sensitive area. When teachers teach in certain areas, they have to teach it straight down the line.â€•

Helphinstineâ€™s curriculum included two controversial powerpoint presentations. View the presentations "Eugenics" and "Human" - links are provided below.Helphinstineâ€™s PowerPoint presentation displayed the following quote from a leading British evolutionist who is commonly referenced by Creationists. â€œThe theory of evolution (is) a theory universally accepted not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.â€• (D.M.S. Watson, â€œAdaptation,â€• Nature, Vol. 123 [sic Vol. 124] (1929), p. 233).

â€œHe taught that evolution doesnâ€™t exist,â€• said seven-year board member Glen Lasken. â€œOf course we want our students to think, but this went beyond that. He spent four days dismantling the theory of evolution for these kids. He was terminated for a gross error in judgment, without checking with the superintendent or principal. This was an extreme error in judgment.â€•

In a phone interview, 27-year old Helphinstine said that his whole purpose was to promote critical thinking. â€œEugenics, the self directed evolution of mankind is an interesting subject. Every teacher brings in supplemental material. What is standard curriculum?â€• asked Helphinstine who has a masterâ€™s degree in science from Oregon State University.

The PowerPoint presentation included photos of dead bodies taken during the Holocaust and referenced a 1941 article printed in The Journal of American Psychiatric Association calling for the killing of mentally retarded children, referred to as â€œnatures mistakesâ€•.

â€œHe was trying to make the point that not only is evolution wrong; he suggested that evolution is used for bad purposes. Evolution was used as an experimental basis in Nazi Germany. He said the founding fathers of Planned Parenthood are Nazis. His PowerPoint presentation of the Holocaust is pretty revolting stuff. What is most discouraging is that he says he was trying to encourage critical thinking. This was a calculated decision on his part to bend young minds,â€• says Lasken.

Board members met with Helphinstine in private for approximately 90 minutes before a public meeting on the matter, though the teacher did not stay for the public forum.

â€œMr. Helphinstine was dismissed for failing to teach science in a freshman biology class. He didnâ€™t expressly teach Creationism but provided significant messages from advocacy groups in his presentation. The materials he submitted were not age appropriate,â€• said board member Jeff Smith. >View Helpinstine's powerpoint presentation named 'Eugenics'

>View the presentation named 'Human'
(Both links will open in a new browser window.)

Sisters High School biology teacher fired amid controversial curriculum by Alisha Wilson