Exceptional Service to Education

Amy Dunn
force equal instructional time for creation. Once that was declared unconstitutional, the opinion identified a strategic shift—that "fundamentalist opponents of evolution responded with a new tactic...namely, to utilize scientific-sounding language to describe religious beliefs." In time, this was deemed unconstitutional as well.

The court eventually concluded that the Dover Area School District had violated the Establishment Clause. And, in what one might argue added insult to injury, it also declared that "we have addressed the seminal question of whether ID is science. We have concluded that it is not, and moreover that ID cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents," an argument that the plaintiffs' lawyer had made earlier when he said, "This isn't really science against science because that would be two competing arguments based on evidence, research and peer-reviewed articles - and intelligent design has none of those." But the court was not finished. It then stated that both Defendants and many of the leading proponents of ID make a bedrock assumption which is utterly false. Their presupposition is that evolutionary theory is antithetical to a belief in the existence of a supreme being and to religion in general. Repeatedly in this trial, Plaintiffs' scientific experts testified that the theory of evolution represents good science, is overwhelmingly accepted by the scientific community, and that it in no way conflicts with, nor does it deny, the existence of a divine creator (emphasis added).

Dunn: Exceptional Service to Education

Exceptional Service to Education is important in delimiting the boundaries of church and state, but it does not prevent ID-implicit cases from arising. One only has to look to Mississippi, Maryland, Utah, Oklahoma, Michigan (original draft of HB 5036) and Kansas.

In a related matter, prior to the court decision, the citizens of Dover Area had an opportunity to support their school district on the ID issue. But in a resounding rejection of their board, and presumably its national spotlight, eight incumbent board members, all Republicans, were defeated in the November midterm elections and replaced by Democrats. The party affiliation is significant only in so much that it was President Bush whom the advocates of ID claimed implicit support when he declared, "I think that part of education is to expose people to different schools of thought." That simple statement divorced from its ID context could not be more accurate. But divorced it was not.

While the district's legal fees were covered by the pro bono work of TMLC, it still had to pick up the Plaintiffs' costs. That bill to Dover Area taxpayers exceeded $1 million, something that Michigan school districts might want to reflect upon.

Fallout in Ohio - Its Science Curriculum

In 2004, the Ohio State Board of Education (SBE), voted 13-5 to adopt science standards that included a lesson plan called "Critical Analysis of Evolution," Written by HS biology teacher, Bryan Leonard, and based on the faulty criticisms and inaccurate representations of evolution found in Jonathan Wells' Icons of Evolution, the lesson plan represented Leonard's claim that there existed "scientific data...challenging macroevolution." The problem is that no such accepted data exists. The NAS informed Governor Taft that the lesson plan was "defective because it is not science and has no place in the science curriculum." Concern also lay with the potential for the so-called "critique" devolving into an introduction of creationist misrepresentations of evolution since the proposal in its original draft had cited several creationist publications.

With the Kitzmiller v. Dover decision having already come down forcefully against ID, on February 14, 2006 the Ohio SBE reversed itself on the lesson plan and corresponding curriculum indicator. Curiously, this action was also taken against the legal opinion offered by SBE lawyers. But given the plan and curriculum standard's inauspicious roots, not to mention the potential cost of any litigation, one might reasonably argue that this action was prudent.

The Grand Valley State University College of Education is comprised of many faculty who have provided outstanding service to our students and programs. Two of these faculty, Monte Czuhai and Jerry Victor, retired in June 2006. Monte Czuhai was with GVSU for the past seven years as Program Coordinator for elementary teacher assistants. Prior to joining the faculty at GVSU, Monte was an elementary principal at Kenowa Hills Schools for 25 years. Monte is an alumnus of Michigan State University. He is the youngest of 15 children born to Polish immigrant parents. Monte said at the retirement celebration, "This has been the icing on the cake of my career. "I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to work with "youngsters" of all ages, and to be of service to them."

Jerry Victor was with GVSU for the past 11 years as the Coordinator for secondary teacher assistants. Prior to joining the faculty at GVSU, Jerry was the principal of East Kentwood High School for 15 years and then an Assistant Superintendent for Instruction at Kentwood Public Schools for five years. He is an alumnus of the University of Michigan where he played football. Jerry has two children and two grandsons. He plans on traveling and spending more time with his family after retirement. "I have enjoyed working with both the staff and students at GVSU," said Jerry. "Especially the teacher assistants and student teachers I've had the pleasure to supervise."

At GVSU, Monte and Jerry were responsible in ensuring that our teacher assistants were ready to move into their student teaching. Monte and Jerry will leave the COE with fond memories and big shoes to fill.