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In the October 2007 issue of *Discover* magazine, Liza Lentini [examines](#) [4] the creationism/evolution controversy, with a focus on teachers. She begins in Kansas, with a pair of teachers at private Christian schools who use textbooks that "present the universe as the direct creation of God and refute the man-made idea of evolution" and think that "The term 'evolution' is misused. ... Conservative scientists don't use that word." A third teacher, Karen Heins, teaches in the Kansas public schools, where she faced frequent attempts to compromise the integrity of science education: "At her last teaching job, 'at a real small town,' a particularly influential minister was encouraging teachers to 'spread the Word' among their young ones in any way they could. Karen was teaching science then and found the atmosphere to be too insufferable to describe."

Reviewing the controversy over evolution in the Kansas state science standards and the trial in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, Lentini suggests, "The crux of the issue lies in the distinction between intelligent design and creationism, and whether or not there's a difference between the two," and quotes NCSE deputy director Glenn Branch's explanation of the strategic vagueness of the latest incarnation of creationism: "First, by not taking a stand on issues that divide creationists, the intelligent design movement hopes to maintain a big tent under which creationists of all stripes are welcome to shelter. Second, by not identifying the designer as God, the intelligent design movement sought to immunize the position from constitutional scrutiny: The idea was to purge creationism of its overt religiosity, so that intelligent design could succeed where creation science failed."

Later in the article, theology professor William Dinges of the Catholic University of America offers his characterization of "intelligent design" as "a backdoor antievolution initiative, an attempt to turn science on itself and, paradoxically, reject its hegemonic influence. It's an affirmation of the efficacy of biblical literalism, an attempt to make Genesis scientifically respectable, the latest twist in the (pseudo)saga of

'science vs. religion.'" Noting that young-earth creationist organizations like the Institute for Creation Research and Answers in Genesis frequently promote "intelligent design" material, NCSE's Glenn Branch commented, "their thinking, presumably, was that getting intelligent design in the public schools would at least accomplish a lot of what they wanted, if not all."

Exemplifying the big tent strategy was a pair of teachers in Gull Lake, Michigan, who were using *Of Pandas and People* and other creationist material in their science classes; when their school board instructed them to desist (*Kalamazoo Gazette*, June 14, 2005), the Thomas More Law Center, which represented the unsuccessful defendants in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, threatened to sue, although no suit was ever filed. Richard Ramsey, the superintendent of the Gull Lake school district, told Lentini, "we haven't thought about ["intelligent design"] in a while ... not a topic we'd like to revisit, to tell you the truth." She reports, "As a result of the controversy, Ramsey's team conducted a statewide survey of Michigan public schools' science programs and found not one that thought ["intelligent design"] was beneficial in a science class."

Back in Kansas, Harry McDonald (a past president of [Kansas Citizens for Science](#) [5], a grassroots organization that defends the teaching of evolution in the state) diagnoses the current assault on evolution education as symptomatic of a larger problem: "Information is considered 'valid' only if it agrees with our preconceived notion of reality. Science is considered a tool to help convince people to adopt a certain political opinion. If the scientific consensus disagrees with that opinion, political appointees rewrite the reports, and dissenters are left off of science advisory boards." For the creationists, too, there's a larger problem in the background: Lentini's article ends in a flurry of quotations illustrating that their objections to evolution are at bottom not to the science but to its supposed consequences for faith and morals.

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