

To the Grantsburg School Board

As science teachers and members of the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers (WSST), we are writing to you because we are concerned about the recent action the Grantsburg School Board has taken with respect to the teaching of evolution in the Grantsburg Schools. First, permit us to introduce ourselves. WSST was founded in 1958 and with a current membership of almost 2,000, we are the largest organization in Wisconsin devoted to the advancement of science education. Our purpose is to promote, support and improve science education in the state of Wisconsin by providing leadership, advocacy, and programs to enhance the teaching and learning of science. WSST is a chapter of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), long a leader in science education nationally.

The motion recently adopted by the Grantsburg Board, *“When theories of origin are taught, students will study various scientific models/theories of origins and identify the scientific data supporting each,”* is, in our professional opinion, terribly misguided. To our knowledge, the only viable scientific theory in this area is the theory of evolution. Your motion, by its simple presence, implies that the Board believes that there are other, competing scientific theories. The fact that your motion is limited to “theories of origin” and not to the entirety of science, similarly suggests that the Board has something specific in mind with respect to the teaching of “origins.”

We encourage you to closely examine the NSTA position statement on The Teaching of Evolution. This statement can be viewed on the web at:

http://www.nsta.org/main/pdfs/PositionStatement_Evolution.pdf

The statement says quite clearly that “evolution has not been emphasized in science curricula in a manner commensurate to its importance because of official policies, intimidation of science teachers, the general public’s misunderstanding of evolutionary theory, and a century of controversy. In addition, teachers are being pressured to introduce creationism, ‘creation science,’ and other nonscientific views, which are intended to weaken or eliminate the teaching of evolution.” The statement goes on to say that “evolution is a unifying concept for science,” and points out that “scientific disciplines with a historical component, such as astronomy, geology, biology, and anthropology, cannot be taught with integrity if evolution is not emphasized.”

With respect to “alternative” views, the statement says, “‘Creation science’ is a religious effort to support special creationism through methods of science. Teachers are often pressured to include it or other related nonscientific views

such as ‘abrupt appearance theory,’ ‘initial complexity theory,’ ‘arguments against evolution,’ or ‘intelligent design theory’ when they teach evolution. Scientific creationist claims have been discredited by the available scientific evidence. They have no empirical power to explain the natural world and its diverse phenomena. Instead, creationists seek out supposed anomalies among many existing theories and accepted facts. Furthermore, ‘creation science’ claims do not lead to new discoveries of scientific knowledge.”

We can well believe that you may have passed your motion in the belief that doing so would encourage critical thinking skills among your students. If this is the case, we believe your motion is wide of the mark because there is no way students can learn critical thinking skills when they are told that nonscientific material has an underlying scientific basis. Rather than introducing students to critical thinking skills, we believe that such instruction will simply confuse them about the very nature of science. Given the large number of vitally important scientific issues currently confronting our society, confusion of this sort cannot be in society’s best interest. Additionally, we fear that your students will simply not be able to effectively compete academically in college with students who have been exposed to high quality science instruction in high school.

Please remember that WSST is a non-partisan, non-political group whose sole interest lies in promoting high quality science instruction throughout Wisconsin. Our letter is intended to bring information to your attention about which we believe you may be unaware. Our hope is that you will rescind your motion and not interfere in the science curriculum.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter. We hope to be hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

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125. *Cynthia Skinner*, Crandon High School
126. *Denise Lawrence-Steiner*, James Madison Middle School, Appleton
127. *Donna Melchior*, Lodi High School
128. *Anthony Schnell*, Lodi High School
129. *Tim Byers*, UW-Stevens Point
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131. *Heather Harris*, Northland College
132. *Joanne Morgan*, Central High School, LaCrosse
133. *Robert Orłowski*, Dodgeland Middle School
134. *Patricia Jarzynski*, Watertown High School
135. *Shirley Sklavos*, Badger High School, Lake Geneva
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142. *Maru Jo Pugh*, Shawano Community Middle School
143. *Jeff Martis*, Shattuck Middle School, Neenah, WI
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146. *John Lemberger*, Associate Professor of Science Education, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
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153. *Bernie Terrien*, Green Bay Southwest High School, Green Bay, WI
154. *John A. Jaeschke*, Madison Metropolitan School District Science Teacher
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170. *Kate Meredith*, Education Consultant, Trempealeau, WI
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172. *Tolga Hanhan*, Superior Middle School, Superior, WI
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174. *Judy Gilbert*, Ashland High School, Ashland, WI
175. *Betty Jo Azpell*, Divine Savior Holy Angels H.S.
176. *Mark Mosey*, Colfax High School
177. *Anne Donnellan*, Appleton East High School
178. *Jack Samuelson*, Sally Ride Academy
179. *Dean Simon*, Kimberly High School
180. *Susan Campbell*, Viroqua High School
181. *Andrea Billings*, Lakeland Union High School
182. *Paul Herder*, Marshfield High School
183. *Melinda Sas*, Biology, Environmental Science Freedom High School
184. *Linda Millard*, Appleton West High School
185. *Kevin McKinnon*, Elkhorn Area High School, Elkhorn WI
186. *Ted Wilson*, Medford Area Senior High, Medford, WI
187. *Mike Smits*, Appleton East High School
188. *Valerie Pumala*, Cameron Middle School
189. *Jim Geoffrey*, Biology, Kaukauna High School

190. *Paul Alexander*, Rio Middle School, Rio WI
191. *Sherry Williams*, Homestead High School, Mequon, WI
192. *John Whitsett*, Fond du Lac High School
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195. *Steve Krings*, Southwest High School
196. *Brett Grunwaldt*, Preble High School, Green Bay
197. *R.E. Phillips*, Green Bay East High School, Green bay. Wi
198. *Rich Krieg*, Green Bay East High School
199. *Craig Phillips*, Baraboo Middle School
200. *Gale Weaver*, Kaukauna High School
201. *Neil Walker*, Gren Bay East High School
202. *James D. Servais*, Green Bay East High School
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204. *Steve Bower*, Waunakee Community School District
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209. *Kevin Niemi*, UW-Madison, Center for Biology Education
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211. *Mark Jahnke*, Waunakee High School
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233. *Michael Burd*, Watertown Unified Schools

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241. *John A. Nevins*, Crandon High School
242. *M. Paul Verdon*, Menomonie Public Schools
243. *Chris Kyles*, Menomonie Middle School
244. *David Bergerson*, Lincoln High School, Wisconsin Rapids
245. *Marlessa Benson*, Kimberly High School
246. *Paul Varsho*, Menomonie Middle School
247. *Roger N. Simon*, Menasha High School
248. *Robin Kroyer-Kubicek*, Slinger High School
250. *Karen Schroeder*, Beloit-Turner School District
251. *Ann Quale*, T. J. Walker Middle School, Sturgeon Bay
252. *Bruce Prentice*, Ashland High School
253. *Julie Fitzpatrick*, Fond du Lac School District
254. *Julie Poetzel*, Menomonee Falls North Jr. High/ EA Science National Board Certified
255. *Sue E. Bridson*, UW-Madison Arboretum
256. *Cheryl Wille-Schlesser*, Mt. Horeb Middle School
257. *Kathy Miner*, UW-Madison Arboretum
258. *Margie Winter*, Fond du Lac High School
259. *Steve Pike*, Madison West High School
260. *Eric Gordee*, Madison Middle/ Appleton Area School District
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262. *Katy Holz*, Wilson Middle, Appleton Area School District
263. *Penny Girdeen*, Viking Middle School
264. *Randy Hartwig*, Marshfield High School
265. *Karyl Rosenbnerg*, Nicolet Union High School
266. *Julie Jensen*, Middleton High School
267. *Lisa A. Wachtel*, Madison Metropolitan School District, Science Coordinator
268. *Marie Anderson*, Prescott High School
269. *Pete Nielsen*, Kettle Moraine High School
270. *Peter J. Pauc*, Union Grove High School
271. *Jill Hunger*, Sauk Prairie High School
272. *John W. Hill*, University of Wisconsin-River Falls
273. *Cheri Marston*, Slinger High School
274. *Carol Ochsner*, Monroe High School
275. *Mary K. Ploeser*, Spring Harbor Middle School
276. *Antoinette Key*, West Salem High School
277. *Lori Pedretti*, Prescott High School
278. *Lynn Schadrie*, Appleton West High School
279. *Michael Emerine*, Biology Teacher Appleton West High School

280. *Ann Kroncke*, Platteville High School
281. *Cindy Halter*, concerned citizen
282. *Alan Bratberg*, Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau Middle School
283. *Jennifer Stenberg*, Baraboo High School
284. *Gail Feldkamp*, Middle school teacher, Appleton, WI
285. *Karen Mesmer*, Baraboo Middle School
286. *Melody Orban*, Kenosha Unified School District
287. *Nicole Fuhrmann*, Baraboo High School
288. *Greg Franzen*, Appleton West
289. *Marc Thwaites*, Stevens Point Area Senior High
290. *Tim Wright*, Stevens Point Area Senior High
291. *Bruce G. Smith*, Appleton Area School District
292. *Sarah Lucas*, Baraboo High School
293. *Brian Mastin*, Onalaska Middle School
294. *Lori Walker*, Sheboygan Falls Middle School
295. *Gary Dallman*, Red Smith Middle School
296. *Victor Akemann*, Stevens Point Area Senior High (SPASH)
297. *Beth Abing*, Cassville High School
298. *Brian C. Sawyer*, Cedar Grove - Belgium Middle School, Cedar Grove, WI
299. *Donald J. Donaker*, Real Union Of Social Science
300. *Catherine Wegner*, St. Bernard Catholic School
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314. *J. Scott Thiel*, Altoona Middle School, School District of Altoona
315. *Victor Sorensen*, Altoona High School
316. *Todd Lenz*, Altoona High School
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319. *Robert Kuchta*, Chippewa Falls High School
320. *Mark Cloutier*, Chippewa Falls High School
321. *Michael Stutzman*, Whitewater Middle School
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323. *Joe Spolar*, Middleton High School
324. *J August Stellmacher, M.Div.*, Appleton Central Alternative High School
325. *Lon Wilson*, Bloomer High School

326. *Wendy Esch*, Shawano Community High School
327. *Christopher Perillo*, Indian Trail Academy, Kenosha
328. *James Jorsch*, Tremper High School, Kenosha
329. *Dave Imhoff*, Washington Elementary, Waupun
330. *Kevin D. Cunningham*, Dept. of Chemistry, UW-Madison
331. *Matt Propsom*, T.J. Walker Middle School
332. *Dana Lindh*, Biology Teacher, Monticello Public Schools
333. *Maheen Sarbolouki*, Madison Country Day School
334. *Lonnie Clark*, Science Teacher - Boscobel Area Schools
335. *Peter G. Sobol*, UW Madison, History of Science Dep't (honorary fellow)
336. *Caryn Fleming*, DeForest High School
337. *Meg McLaughlin*, DeForest High School
338. *Stephen H. Schmidt*, Newman Catholic High School
339. *Paul Bast*, Woodfield Elementary, Waterford
340. *Jim Prosser*, Fond du Lac High School
341. *Kenneth Jacobs*, University School of Milwaukee
342. *Linda Thompson*, Newman Catholic HS, Wausau
343. *Chris Stubbe*, Bay Port High School
344. *Jon Rossmiller*, Horace Mann Middle School Science Teacher, Wausau, WI
345. *Kari Y. Kopach, Ph.D.*, Greendale High School
346. *Dan Graff*, Rice Lake High School
347. *Sarah Waddell*, Velma Hamilton Middle School, Madison
348. *Jack Markin*, Middleton High School
349. *John Mantsch*, Dept Biomedical Sciences, Marquette University
350. *Carol J. Martin*, Oneida Nation High School
351. *William Wendlandt*, Manawa School District
352. *Nate Schurm,an*, North High School, Eau Claire
353. *Andrew Donaldson*, UW-Eau Claire student
354. *Daniel Drangstveit*, Middleton High School
355. *Stephen A. Knudsen*, Newman Catholic High School, Wausau
356. *Ron LeMay*, University School of Milwaukee
357. *John Schecher*, Dodgeland High School, Juneau, WI
358. *Jennifer Mortensen*, Marshall Elementary School
359. *Seth W. Foreman*, Mellen High School
360. *Darrell Smith*, Milwaukee Public Schools
361. *Jane Rubisch*, Chippewa Falls Senior High School
362. *Jim Koelbl*, Catholic Memorial H.S. Waukesha, WI
363. *Theodore J. Eischeid*, Theisen Middle School, Fond du Lac, WI
364. *Becky S. Nutt*, Oneida Nation High School
365. *James Eggert*, University of Wisconsin Stout
366. *Margaret Chmiel*, Marquette University
367. *Erik Andersen*, University of California, Berkeley
368. *John M. Kowalski, Ph.D.*, (Industry)
369. *Edward Drexler*, Pius XI High School, Milwaukee WI
370. *Sue Frozena*, Bay Port H.S. (retired), Green Bay
371. *Andrew J. Petto*, UW-Milwaukee

372. *Jan Dickson*, Gibraltar High School, Fish Creek, WI
373. *Reverend Larry F. Froemming*, Beloit Turner High School
374. *Peter E. Lewandowski*, Antigo High School, Antigo, WI
375. *Cary Anderson*, Appleton West High School (retired)
376. *Don Primmer*, Longfellow Elementary, Clintonville
377. *Lillian Primmer*, Clintonville Middle School
378. *Christopher Perillo*, Indian Trail Academy - Kenosha Unified
379. *Mr. Jensen*, Indian Trail Academy - Kenosha Unified
380. *Rachelle Folger*, U.S. Grant School, Milwaukee, WI
390. *Laura Geibel*, Cudahy High School