



February 8, 2008

Dear Florida State Board of Education Member:

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) supports the draft Florida science standards released by the State Board of Education writing committee on February 1, 2008. We encourage you to approve these standards, which science education experts consider a dramatic improvement over earlier versions. AIBS is a non-profit, professional scientific organization dedicated to advancing research and education in the biological sciences. Our membership includes more than 5,000 individual members and nearly 200 science and education professional societies and organizations, representing roughly 250,000 scientists and educators.

The future educational, employment, and economic growth potential of Florida and the United States depends upon a scientifically literate workforce and a population capable of making informed decisions. A strong foundation in science is required to fuel the advances in research, development, and innovation that are critical to the Florida economy. Thus, we encourage you to support Florida students and teachers by adopting the revised science education standards.

Effective standards must be aligned with peer-reviewed, mainstream science, consistent, and pedagogically appropriate at each grade level. Pseudoscience and religious belief systems are unacceptable content for a science course. The standards drafted by your expert committee of parents, scientists, and educators exceed these requirements. Dr. Lawrence Lerner, an expert on statewide science education standards with the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, has indicated that the revised Sunshine State Standards for science would be among the best in the nation.

AIBS has learned that some individuals are pressing to change the revised standards to reflect their personal belief systems. These individuals seek standards that would imply:

- Evolution is controversial among scientists;
- Scientific evidence against evolution exists; and,
- To be "fair," both sides of the "controversy" about evolution ought to be taught.

These statements are false. The validity and importance of evolution to biology and the broader scientific enterprise is not decided by public opinion polls or by petitions, but through the rigorous method by which scientists conduct and evaluate research. The scientific community agrees with the draft standards' statement that "Evolution is the fundamental concept underlying all of biology and is supported by multiple forms of scientific evidence." Supernatural explanations for natural phenomena as espoused by advocates of creationism and "intelligent design" are not scientifically testable and for centuries have not been accepted as science. The biologists and science educators represented by AIBS, and the scientific community as a whole,

agree that there is no research supporting either creationism or “intelligent design” or challenging the importance of evolution for explaining the history and diversity of life.

The inclusion of non-scientific alternatives to evolution such as creationism or "intelligent design" in the curriculum would misinform and distract students from understanding accepted evolutionary theory. There is no justification for singling out evolution for special skepticism or critical analysis. Its strength as a scientific theory matches that of the theory of gravitation, atomic theory, and the germ theory.

In closing, we encourage you to adopt the revised Sunshine State Standards for science. If we may be of assistance to you in your deliberations, please do not hesitate to contact me or Dr. Holly Menninger at 202-628-1500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. O'Grady". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

Richard T. O'Grady, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

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