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OHIO STATE BOARD ADOPTS SCIENCE STANDARDS THAT PERMIT THE DISCUSSION OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Shawnee Mission, KS - IDnet congratulates the Ohio State Board of Education on its handling of a major scientific controversy about teaching biological origins in public schools.

The issue has been watched by the world because of the profound implications for science, philosophy, and religion, which are inherent in the study of biological evolution and the origin of life.

The key controversy was whether state standards should, on the one hand, promote an "Evolution Only" concept that would restrict criticisms of evolution and censor the discussion of competing scientific theories of origins. Or, whether the standards should take a more objective approach that would permit schools to teach, rather than to suppress, the controversy.

On December 11, 2002, the Board voted 18 - 0 for objectivity and academic freedom and against censorship of competing scientific views. This action followed over a year of deliberations and important fact finding.

The key action taken by the Board involved the replacement of a naturalistic definition of science with a logical definition that is consistent with the scientific method.

The definition adopted was: "Recognize that science is a systematic method of continuing investigation, based on observation, hypothesis testing, measurement, experimentation, and theory building, which leads to more adequate explanations of natural phenomena."

The naturalistic definition that IDnet had opposed, that was offered by the Ohio Science Writing Team and that was rejected by the Board was: "Recognize that scientific knowledge is limited to natural explanations for natural phenomena based on evidence from our senses or technological extensions."

The second positive action taken was the Board's adoption of a new Life Sciences indicator and benchmark that states: "Describe how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolutionary theory." This necessarily challenges students and teachers to confront and openly discuss the scientific controversies that surround biological evolution. This is designed to open rather than to shut minds about an issue that is important to science, religion and culture.

The Board also added the following clarifying statement to the benchmark and indicator: “The intent of this indicator does not mandate the teaching or testing of Intelligent Design.” This has major significance since the implication of the statement is that the “teaching or testing of intelligent design,” is permitted.

While commending the State Board for substantially implementing an objective, teach-the-scientific-controversy proposal, we also note that the language in the evolutionary theory sections is still problematic in numerous places. In many cases aspects of evolutionary theory that are in fact controversial are presented as factual or as the only viable explanation. Also, we believe it is critical that standards and curricula explicitly require an appropriate disclosure of material assumptions and a discussion of the subjectivity that is inherent in origins science due to its historical character.

Intelligent Design network, inc. is a member based nonprofit organization. IDnet promotes objective evidence-based science education with regard to the origin of the universe and of life and its diversity. It also seeks to increase public awareness of the scientific evidence of intelligent design in the universe and living systems.

Intelligent Design is a scientific theory that intelligent causes are responsible for the origin of the universe and of life and its diversity. It holds that design is empirically detectable in nature, and particularly in living systems. Intelligent Design is an intellectual movement that includes a scientific research program for investigating intelligent causes and that challenges naturalistic explanations of origins which currently drive science education and research.