



Intelligent Design network, inc.

P.O. Box 14702, Shawnee Mission, Kansas 66285-4702
(913) 268-0852; (913)-268-0852 (fax); IDnet@att.net
www.IntelligentDesignnetwork.org

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Contact: Intelligent Design network, inc.
John Calvert, Managing Director
913-268-0852
Jody Sjogren, Managing Director
614-485-8000

IDnet CONGRATULATES OHIO STATE BOARD ON IMPROVEMENTS TO OHIO SCIENCE STANDARDS

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 October 15, the Board unanimously voted for objectivity and academic freedom and against censorship of competing scientific views. This action followed nearly a year of deliberations and important fact finding. The Board wisely invited experts having diverse views to testify and explain their respective positions. They also solicited and listened to the views of the public through an interactive web site, emails and public meetings.

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: "...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."

A similar definition adopted in Kansas in February 2001, was described by its authors as a definition that necessarily excludes scientific discussion of intelligent causes for life. Thus, a naturalistic definition has the effect of censoring the competing design hypothesis and the scientific evidence and data that support it.

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.

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. Certain aspects of evolutionary theory that are in fact controversial are presented as factual, or as the only viable explanation, in a number of benchmarks and indicators. Also, we believe the standards should more explicitly permit a discussion of the full range of scientific views regarding our origins, including the competing design hypothesis. Finally, we believe it is critical that standards and curricula explicitly require a disclosure of material assumptions used in explanations provided.

The action of the Board reflects the adoption of a "resolution of intention" to formally adopt the standards by the end of the year in the form presented and after further comment from the public. A public hearing will be held in Columbus on Tuesday, November 12. The State Board of Education will vote to adopt the standards at their December meeting.

Intelligent Design network, inc. is a member based nonprofit organization. IDnet promotes 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.