

TEXAS FREEDOM NETWORK PRESS RELEASE

TFN Applauds Pro-Science Draft Curriculum Standards

Teacher Work Groups Propose 21st-Century Science Standards that Support Strong Instruction on Evolution and Block Teaching on Creationism

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AUSTIN – The president of the Texas Freedom Network is praising proposed new public school science curriculum standards that put the interests of students above politics in Texas classrooms. The proposed standards are the product of official Texas Education Agency work groups made up of teachers and academics nominated by State Board of Education members.

“These work groups have crafted solid standards that provide a clear road map to a 21st-century science education for Texas students,” TFN President Kathy Miller said. “These common-sense standards respect the right of families to pass on their own religious beliefs to their children while ensuring that public schools give students a sound science education that prepares them to succeed in college and the jobs of the future.”

The work groups revised standards for science education in grades K-12. The groups submitted proposed standards to the Texas Education Agency last week. TEA posted the standards today.

(<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/scienceTEKS.html>). Two key sections in the proposed standards for high school biology will help ensure that what students learn about evolution is based on sound science:

- The work groups removed unscientific language about “strengths and weaknesses” of scientific theories for biology and other high school science courses. Creationists, including those on the Texas State Board of Education, have seized on that language to promote discredited attacks on scientific evidence supporting evolution. The new standards adopt more scientific language, requiring students to “analyze and evaluate scientific explanations using empirical evidence, logical reasoning, and experimental and observational testing.” That language is matched in new standards proposed by the Science Teachers Association of Texas.

- The work groups added language from the National Academy of Sciences to the standards making clear that supernatural explanations are not based on science and do not belong in classrooms: “Science uses observational evidence to make predictions of natural phenomena and to construct testable explanations. If ideas are based upon purported forces outside of nature, they cannot be tested using scientific methods.” That language clearly puts supernatural and religious concepts such as “intelligent design”/creationism outside the realm of science.

The State Board of Education will begin discussing the proposed new standards this fall and have tentatively set a deadline of March 2009 for final adoption. Publishers use the state’s curriculum standards to create new science textbooks. The state is scheduled to adopt new science textbooks in 2011.

Earlier this year, the State Board of Education rejected nearly three years of work by TEA work groups that drafted new curriculum standards for English/language arts and reading. The board approved a final standards document patched together overnight and circulated to other board members just hours before the final vote.

“It’s time for state board members to listen to classroom teachers and true experts instead of promoting their own personal agendas,” Miller said. “Our students can’t succeed with a 19th-century science education in their 21st-century classrooms. We applaud the science work groups for recognizing that fact.”

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The Texas Freedom Network is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization of religious and community leaders who advance a mainstream agenda supporting public education, religious freedom and individual liberties.