

A column about Kansas Science Standards

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By Steve Abrams, chairman, Kansas State Board of Education

Evolution. Creation. Intelligent Design. Is there any truth or facts that can come out of what has been bandied about in the media in the last few days?

Let me first comment a little about what my critics claim. Some of my critics claim it is nothing short of trying to insert the supernatural into the Science classroom. Others claim I am trying to insert creation into the Science classroom via the backdoor. A few claim that I know nothing about science and that my Doctorate must have come from a mail order catalog.

The critics also claim that in the scientific community, there is no controversy about evolution. They then proceed to explain that I ought to understand something about this, because surely I can see that over a period of time, over many generations, a pair of dogs will “evolve”. There is a high likelihood that the progeny several generations down the line will not look like the original pair of dogs. And then some of the critics will claim that this proves that all living creatures came from some original set of cells.

Obviously, that is one of the reasons that we tried to further define evolution. We want to differentiate between the genetic capacity in each species genome that permits it to change with the environment as being different from changing to some other creature. We want to provide more clarity to this inflamed issue and we ask that the evolutionists reveal what they are doggedly hiding, but they prefer to misinform the media and assassinate the character of qualified scientists who are willing to shed some light. In our Science Curriculum Standards, we called this micro-evolution and macro-evolution... changes within kinds and changing from one kind to another. Again, as previously stated, evolutionists want nothing to do with trying to clarify terms and meanings.

Most of the critics that send me email send 4 basic comments: they claim that we are sending Kansas back to the Dark Ages, or that we are making a mockery of science, or that we are morons for putting Intelligent Design into the Science Standards or that they also are Christian and believe in evolution.

There are a few critics that want to present an intellectual argument about why Intelligent Design should not be included in the Science Curriculum Standards. They claim that ID is not good science. From the aspect that Intelligent Design is not a full fledged developed discipline, I would agree. But, if one takes the time to read the Science Curriculum Standards, they would see that Intelligent Design is not included.

So, what are a couple of the main areas that our critics take issue?

It seems that instead of making it a “he said”, and then “she said”, and then “he said” and so on and on, it would make sense to go to the document about which everyone is supposedly commenting about: The Kansas Science Curriculum Standards.

The critics claim that we have redefined science to include a backdoor to Biblical creation or the super-natural.

From Science Curriculum Standards, page ix:

Science is a systematic method of continuing investigation that uses observations, hypothesis testing, measurement, experimentation, logical argument and theory building to lead to more adequate explanations of natural phenomena.

Where does that say the field of science is destroyed and the back door opened to bring Biblical creation into the science classroom?

Another claim that our critics promote through the media is that we are inserting Intelligent Design. Again, if we go to the Science Curriculum Standards, Standard 3 Benchmark 3 Indicators 1-7 (pg 75-77). This is the heart of the “evolution” area. Only 7 indicators...

- 1) understands biological evolution, descent with modification, is a scientific explanation for the history of the diversification of organisms from common ancestors.
- 2) understands populations of organisms may adapt to environmental challenges and changes as a result of natural selection, genetic drift, and various mechanisms of genetic change.
- 3) understands biological evolution is used to explain the earth’s present day biodiversity: the number, variety and variability of organisms.
- 4) understands organisms vary widely within and between populations. Variation allows for natural selection to occur.
- 5) understands that the primary mechanism of evolutionary change (acting on variation) is natural selection.
- 6) understands biological evolution is used as a broad, unifying theoretical framework for biology.
- 7) explains proposed scientific explanations of the origin of life as well as scientific criticisms of those explanations.

As anyone can see, Intelligent Design is not included. But many of our critics already know this. This is not about Biblical creation or Intelligent Design... it is about the last 5 words of indicator 7... “scientific criticisms of those explanations.”

Evolutionists do not want students to know about or in any way to think about scientific criticisms of evolution. Evolutionists are the ones minimizing open scientific inquiry from their explanation of the origin of life. They do not want students to know that peer reviewed journals, articles and books have scientific criticisms of evolution.

So instead of participating in the Science hearings before the State Board Sub-Committee and presenting testimony about evolution, they stand out in the hall and talk to the media about how the PhD scientists that are presenting testimony about the criticisms “aren’t really scientists”... “they really don’t know anything”... “they obviously are in the minority and any real scientist knows there is not a controversy about evolution.”

Instead of discussing the issues of evolution, noisy critics go into attack mode and do a character assassination of anyone that happens to believe that evolution should actually be subject critical analysis.

In spite of the fact that the State Board approved Science Curriculum Standards that endorses critical analysis of evolution (supported by **unrefuted** testimony from many credentialed scientists at the Science Hearings) and does NOT include Intelligent Design, and add to that, the fact that scientific polls indicate that a large percentage of parents do not want evolution taught as dogma in the science classroom... what is the response from some of the Superintendents around Kansas? They seem to indicate that, "We don't care what the State Board does, and we don't care what parents want, we are going to continue teaching evolution just as we have been doing."

But I guess we shouldn't be surprised, because Superintendents and local boards of education in some districts continue to promulgate pornography as "literature", even though many parents have petitioned the local boards to remove the porn. Obviously that is a different issue than the Science Standards, but it still points out the lack of commitment on the part of administration in some districts to allow parents to control the education for their own children.

I have repeatedly stated this is not about Biblical creation or Intelligent Design... this is about what constitutes good science standards for the students of the state of Kansas. I would encourage those who believe we are promoting a back door to creation or Intelligent Design to actually do your homework... READ and investigate the Science Curriculum Standards (www.ksde.org) and base your comments on them and not on the misinformation critics have been plastering the print and clogging the airways with... unless of course, your only defense really is baseless character assassination.