Kansas Dumbs Down Science to Promote Evolution

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Liberals have long realized that, if they can win the battle over what is taught in schools, they will win elections. While they claim to believe in free speech, they often have little tolerance for alternate points of view in the schools.
In 1999, a popularly-elected Kansas Board of Education changed its science teaching standards to allow students to make factual scientific criticisms of evolution. This created a national uproar in intellectual circles and the media and, last November, the pro-evolution forces elected their allies to the state school board.

The new board is now planning on imposing stricter evolution requirements at its February meeting.* The board has posted its new 2001 standards alongside the 1999 standards.

The 2001 standards contain provisions to prohibit scientific evaluation and debate about evolution. This means dumbing down science in order to promote evolution.

For example, the 1999 standards mandated that "no evidence or analysis of evidence that contradicts a current science theory should be censored." The 2001 standards deleted this requirement.

The 2001 standards encourage teachers to evade tough questions from students about the validity of evolution theories. Instead of addressing the students' questions, "the teacher should explain why the question is outside the domain of natural science."

The 2001 standards remove an educational geology experiment and replace it with "Toilet Paper Earth History." Students are instructed to "Plot the major events (last ice age, beginning of Paleozoic Era, etc.) of earth history on a roll of toilet paper. Each sheet of toilet paper = 100 million years."

It gets worse. The 1999 standards taught the significance of an important scientific concept called "falsification," which is crucial to understanding what science is all about. As recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in its 1993 Daubert decision, an idea is in the realm of science if it has the potential of being "falsified" by an experiment.

For example, the idea that sunsets are beautiful is not scientific unless some procedure is contemplated to determine whether or not sunsets really are beautiful. On the other hand, a theory that the sun rises in the east is falsifiable because it could be disproved by the sun rising once in the west.

Evolution can encounter difficulties with the falsification test. Much of what is taught as evolution in the schools is not falsifiable at all and thus cannot truly be called science.

The 1999 Kansas standards stated: "Learn about falsification. Example: What would we accept as proof that the theory that all cars are black is wrong? . . . Answer: One car of any color but black and only one time. . . . No matter how much evidence seems to support a theory, it only takes one proof that it is false to show it to be false."

The 2001 Kansas Board eliminates the falsification test and substitutes the following: "Share interpretations that differ from currently held explanations on topics such as global warming and dietary claims. Evaluate the validity of results and accuracy of stated conclusions."

Repeated problems with the theory of evolution have required its advocates to redefine evolution to mean merely "change." One biology textbook defines evolution as "the totality of all changes that have occurred in organisms from the beginnings of life on earth to the present day."

Obviously, that definition is so vacuous that it is both meaningless and incapable of the falsification test. Another textbook definition of evolution uses fancier language but is similarly empty: "any genotypic and resulting phenotypic change in organisms from generation to generation."

Once students accept such hollow definitions of evolution, it becomes easier to get them to accept more controversial notions. The hypothesis that all living organisms on earth are descended from one primordial ooze can become an exam question.

The 2001 standards pretentiously claim that evolution not only explains all life, it also explains all non-life. It defines biological evolution as "a scientific theory that accounts for present day similarity and diversity among living organisms and changes in non-living entities over time."

If you are baffled as to why the liberals pursue the dogmatic teaching of evolution, a clue might be found in the recent election. Of the 13 states that allow dissent over evolution, George W. Bush won all but one and, of the 10 states that impose the strictest pro- evolution requirements, Gore won all but three.

States that have been imposing stricter pro-evolution requirements are quickly moving to the left politically. The traditionally conservative states of North Carolina, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri, which have been aggressively pushing evolution, recently elected liberal Senators.

The right to scientific dissent is closely related to the right to political dissent. When states abolish rights of students to criticize evolution, suppression of political dissent becomes easier.