

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER REVISION TO THE SECOND DRAFT  
OF  
KANSAS SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS**

March 29, 2005

Members of the Kansas State Board of Education  
Topeka, Kansas

Re: Kansas Science Education Standards, Draft 2 dated March 9, 2005

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On January 27, 2005, and consistent with requests made in October, the writing committee discussed at length and voted upon the proposals attached to our letter dated December 10, 2005. One of our proposals was accepted and another was approved by a vote of 14 for, 3 against and 6 abstentions. The most significant, dealing with the definition of science, only narrowly failed to secure a majority by a vote of 10 for, 12 against, and one abstention. Although the remaining proposals were defeated, most garnered a favorable vote by at least one-third of the committee.

Thus, a disagreement continues to exist within the Science Writing Committee with respect to very substantive issues relating to the inherently controversial issue of teaching students about the origin of life and its diversity. There is general agreement that standard biological evolutionary theory must be presented. However, Draft 2 continues to implicitly discourage any critical analysis of the theory that would “weaken” it. This implication is reinforced by the absence of any learning objective that would inform students of important evidence inconsistent with evolution’s critical assumptions and historical narratives. This is in spite of agreed upon standards that explicitly state that students should critically analyze all scientific theories and consider competing alternatives.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons, and those stated in our letter dated December 10, 2004 regarding Draft 1, we respectfully suggest that the Committee continue to give serious consideration to our proposals. Since they do not have the support of a majority of the Committee we are referring to them as the “Minority Report (Draft 2).”

The proposals in this Minority Report remain substantially the same as those contained in our December 10, report that responds to Draft 1. However, due to the changes in Draft 2, and the vote taken on January 27, 2005, we have slightly altered our proposals to conform to the new format. The substantive changes are detailed on page 2 and 3 of Minority Report (Draft 2). For your convenience we are also delivering a hand marked version that reflects areas of change in blue font.

On March 7, 2005 the Science Committee of the Kansas State Board stated that the hearings should focus on the following question:

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<sup>1</sup> “As part of conducting an inquiry, formulates and revises his or her scientific explanation and models (physical, conceptual or mathematical) using logic and evidence, recognizing potential alternative explanations and models should be considered.” (12<sup>th</sup> Grade, Standard 1, Benchmark 1, Indicator 4 of Draft 2; see also 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Standard 1, Benchmark 1, Indicators 5 and 6 of the Current Standards).

To what extent do the proposed science standards comply with the advice provided by the House and Senate Conferees in enacting the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:

*"The Conferees recognize that a quality science education should prepare students to distinguish the data and testable theories of science from religious or philosophical claims that are made in the name of science. Where topics are taught that may generate controversy (such as biological evolution), the curriculum should help students to understand the full range of scientific views that exist, why such topics may generate controversy, and how scientific discoveries can profoundly affect society."*

This is the perfect question, because our proposals have actually been designed to cause Kansas science education to be responsive to this advice. Accordingly, the explanations that accompany our proposals have been revised to briefly explain how they address the concerns of the NCLB advice.

Following submission of our Minority Report in December, the leadership of the Committee solicited comments from a number of scientists and a science teacher. These comments have been posted on the DOE's web site. Although, we have taken these comments into consideration, we do not believe they have influenced any substantive change in our proposals. We anticipate that we will be issuing written responses to all of those comments and also will be calling witnesses at the hearings scheduled in May that will also address their concerns.

We are now working on our list of witnesses for the hearings. That should be submitted to the Science Committee and the Department of Education by April 4, 2005. We will also submit suggested procedures for the conduct of our presentations and those of any opposition that may arise.

There is one paragraph in our December 10, 2004, letter that we believe needs repeating. That is because, all of our opponents seem to have ignored it.

“Some have argued that the teaching of intelligent design, a scientific alternative to naturalistic theories of origins, should be required. At this point in time, we do not agree with this. Rather, we suggest that teachers be allowed to address scientific alternatives at their own discretion if they sense that it is appropriate for a given class.”

Consistent with this statement you will find no proposal that requires the teaching or testing of intelligent design in the standards. The focus is on critical analysis of evolution and nothing more.

On behalf of all the patrons of Kansas public education, we thank you for this wonderful opportunity to explain why change is needed in this highly charged area of public education. The issues are exceedingly complex and laden with much misunderstanding and misinformation. For the most part our case has had no forum, because it has been inappropriately characterized as religion in disguise. There is a religious problem, but it is one that the proposals seek to eliminate rather than to exacerbate.

We applaud the work of our colleagues during the past year, and are in complete agreement with them regarding the vast majority of the material in Draft 2. It is a major

improvement over existing standards. Our proposals are intended to supplement their excellent and dedicated work.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these recommendations.

**FOR THE PROPONENTS**



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**William S. Harris, PhD**

**The Proponents:**

Tim Crater, MD (Physician)

William S. Harris, PhD (Medical School Professor & Research Biochemist)

Greg Lassey, MS (Former Middle School Science Teacher)

Jay Nicholson, PhD (Entomologist and Science Teacher)

Rick Reeser, MS (Former Science Teacher and School Administrator)

Wayne Stringer, MS (Former Biology, Microbiology, Anatomy and Physiology Professor)

Richard Unruh, MS, (High School Science Teacher)

John Yost, MS (Jr College Science Teacher)

Attachments: Proposed Revisions in context and with explanations

cc: Chair, Co-Chair and Members of the Committee

John Calvert, Esq.