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## Dover Area School District

### SCHOOL BOARD PRESS RELEASE FOR BIOLOGY CURRICULUM--updated 11/19/04

#### Dover Area Board of Directors Biology Curriculum Press Release

The Dover Area School District, would like to make the following statement as a press release concerning the Dover Area School District Biology curriculum. No official statement has been given prior to today because the curriculum update and work on the curriculum implementation was not complete, and the district was not interested in giving out bits and pieces of the curriculum effort at various times. The Dover Area School District was interested in working on a curriculum that included individual comments and suggestions from the School Board, community, administration, teachers, and our solicitor. The Dover Area School District now has a completed Biology Curriculum and implementation procedure. In an attempt to clarify and correct information the District would like to now state the following:

Over the past seven months, the Dover Area School District Board of Directors has been updating its Science and Biology Curriculum and adopting and approving support materials including textbooks. The School Board has made a considerable effort to develop and adopt a fair and balanced science curriculum. During this discussion numerous individuals and the media have made confusing, conflicting, and inaccurate statements. Many of these statements have been personal opinions or misunderstood interpretations of District activities and curriculum directives. Some statements and opinions from the media, community members, and board members have been assumed as official Dover Area School District policy or curriculum procedures and are significantly inaccurate and false. The following is the Dover Area School District official and current history and Biology curriculum and procedure.

The Science Department teachers researched and recommended to the administration the science book, Biology (Prentice Hall) as the textbook for our High School Biology class. The Dover Area School District adopted, approved, and purchased 220 copies of the teacher-and administration-recommended book.

The district also received as a donation 60 copies of Of Pandas and People and the book is now listed as a reference book in the curriculum. It is not a required text, but in an effort to present a balanced curriculum the book is made available to all students who wish to review the book.

The Biology curriculum was also updated to include the following statement:

*? Students will be made aware of gaps/problems in Darwin? s Theory and of other theories of evolution including, but not limited to Intelligent Design. The Origins of Life is not taught.?*

The Assistant Superintendent in charge of curriculum development, Mr. Baksa, in coordination with the Science School department teachers, the district solicitor, and the School Board has developed the following procedural statement to use in implementing the new Biology curriculum language. The following will be read to all students:

*? The state standards require students to learn about Darwin? s Theory of Evolution and to eventually take a standardized test of which evolution is a part.*

*Because Darwin? s Theory is a theory, it is still being tested as new evidence is discovered. The Theory is not a fact. Gaps in the Theory exist for which there is no evidence. A theory is defined as a well-tested explanation that unifies a broad range of observations.*

*Intelligent Design is an explanation of the origin of life that differs from Darwin? s view. The reference book, Of Pandas and People, is available for students to see if they would like to explore this view in an effort to gain an understanding of what Intelligent Design actually involves. As is true with any theory, students are encouraged to keep an open mind.*

*The school leaves the discussion of the Origins of Life up to individual students and their families. As a standards-driven district, class instruction focuses on the standards and preparing students to be successful on standards-based assessments.?*

The statements were developed to provide a balanced view, not teach or present religious beliefs. The Superintendent, Dr. Richard Nilsen, is on record stating that no teacher will teach Intelligent Design, Creationism, or present his/her or the board's religious beliefs. The Dover Area School District wants to support and not discriminate against students and parents that do have competing beliefs, especially in the area of the origin of life debate. Therefore, the School Board has noted that there are other opinions besides Darwin's on the origin of life. School districts are places for inquiry and critical discussions. The above statement and the Dover Area School District's Biology Curriculum is only providing that opportunity for open critical discussions - the real heart of the scientific practice.

Mr. Baksa, and Dr. Nilsen will monitor the instruction to make sure no one is promoting but also not inhibiting religion.

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