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10.23.2007

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The Florida Department of Education released a draft revision of the state science standards on October 19, 2007, and the e-word -- "evolution" -- is not only included but also prominent. In contrast, the 1999 version of the standards received a score of 0/0 for its treatment of evolution in the Fordham Foundation's report *The State of State Science Standards 2005*, which [observed](#) [4], "The E-word is sedulously avoided. ... There is little in the way of useful guidance for teachers or others toward appropriate content in the biological sciences and especially in the history of life and the basic mechanisms of change."

The *Orlando Sentinel* (October 20, 2007) [reported](#) [5], "The draft standards are based on those used in other countries with top science-education programs and the recommendations of national education and science groups. They reduce the number of topics students are taught and push for a deeper understanding of key 'big ideas,' one of which is 'evolution and diversity.'" Joe Wolf, the president of [Florida Citizens for Science](#) [6] ([blog](#) [7]), told the newspaper that if the standards were adopted as they stand, "the kids will have a better understanding of science, which is what it's all about."

There is a sixty-day period during which the public is welcome to [comment](#) [8] on the standards, following which the Florida Board of Education is expected to consider whether to adopt the draft in January 2008. It is already clear that creationists are ready to try to undermine the treatment of evolution in the standards; the *Sentinel* quoted a local televangelist as contending, "Evolution is an educated guess ... That we came from an ape is absolutely ridiculous." But Florida Citizens for Science's Wolf countered, "In the scientific community, it's not an issue."

The state's newspapers are already applauding the appearance of evolution in the standards. Noting that the standards clearly state that "evolution is the fundamental concept underlying all of biology and is

supported by multiple forms of scientific evidence," *Florida Today* (October 23, 2007) editorially [remarked](#) [9], "the board should approve the frank teaching rules, which are part of a broader revamp to strengthen science education in public schools. Florida's children need strong science skills to compete for jobs in a global workforce, and evolution is a critical part of that package."

In its editorial, the *Tallahassee Democrat* (October 23, 2007) also [stressed](#) [10] the economic importance of the integrity of science education: "World-class science standards include coherence, focus and rigor, and schools that lack them can't honestly contend they're world-class schools. In an increasingly complex, technological world, scientific literacy is not a luxury, but a necessity -- especially if Florida expects to compete successfully in a global economy. For science education in our state to be competitive, it must include the teaching of evolution and the explicit acknowledgment that empirical evidence over the past century and a half strongly supports it."

And in its editorial, entitled, "Florida takes educational leap into 21st century," the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (October 24, 2007) [wrote](#) [11] **[Link broken]**, "Florida's public education system has finally evolved to the point where evolution can be taught. Welcome to the real world, Florida," adding, "Proposed science standards say public school students need to learn about evolution, one of the 'big ideas' that need to be taught as part of in-depth, hands-on learning. It's all part of a plan to improve science education, which is woefully lacking in Florida, and get students ready for a technology-based workplace."

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[11] <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/opinion/sfl-editgsevolutioncappnoct24,0,4688088.story>

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