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The Texas state board of education is scheduled to hear testimony on the state's science standards on November 19, 2008, and the treatment of evolution is likely to be a contentious issue. The Texas Education Agency released [drafts](#) [4] of the standards on September 22, 2008, and as the *Dallas Morning News* (September 23, 2008) [reported](#) [5], "Proposed curriculum standards for science courses in Texas schools would boost the teaching of evolution by dropping the current requirement that students be exposed to 'weaknesses' in Charles Darwin's theory of how humans and other life forms evolved. Science standards drafted by review committees of teachers and academics also would put up roadblocks for teachers who want to discuss creationism or 'intelligent design' in biology classes when covering the subject of evolution."

Subsequently, members of the board appointed six outside reviewers to evaluate the standards — including three creationists, two of whom hail from outside Texas — and their comments are all now [available](#) [4] (in PDF form) on the TEA website. The panels that wrote the standards for the various subjects were furnished with the outside reviews as well as feedback from the public, a comparison of the draft standards to the Texas College Readiness Standards, and a comparison of the draft standards with the highly regarded Massachusetts science standards, as Texas Citizens for Science's Steven Schafersman [reports](#) [6]; the panels have revised the standards in light of the comments, and it is the latest revisions that are going to the board, although they are not yet publicly available.

According to the [agenda](#) [7] posted at the TEA website, the board is now scheduled to consider the standards from November 19 to November 21, hearing testimony on November 19. NCSE encourages

anyone who is ready, willing, and able to testify in defense of the proper treatment of evolution and the nature of science to register to testify. To register, visit the Texas Education Agency in person at 1701 North Congress Avenue in Austin; telephone (512) 463-9007; or download a [form](#) [8], complete it (checking the "Committee of the Full Board" box) and fax it to (512) 936-4319. Act now: November 17 is the last day for registration, and no one will be allowed to testify who has not registered in advance. NCSE's Steven Newton is available (via e-mail to newton@ncseweb.org [9]) to advise prospective testifiers.(Update: the Texas Freedom Network offers its [advice](#) [10], too.)

After the board considers the standards, what next? Texas Citizens for Science's Schafersman explains, "the science panels will have one last attempt to revise the standards to final form during December 4-6. After that, only the [state board of education] can revise the science standards by majority vote during their January 2009 meeting. The standards receive final adoption in March 2009 and are to be used by teachers and textbook publishers for the next ten years." NCSE's deputy director Glenn Branch observed, in a Halloween [post](#) [11] for the Beacon Broadside blog, that "the 'strengths and weaknesses' language [in the old standards] was selectively applied only to evolution in 2003 by members of the board attempting to dilute the treatment of evolution in the biology textbooks then under consideration. After a concerted effort by scientists, teachers, parents, and others to defend evolution, all eleven books were eventually adopted — but it was a long, hard, and unedifying ordeal." So it is clear that the standards matter.

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