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Battle in the Classroom

State science standards under attack

Are state science standards worthless? Are kids learning about evolution or being spoon-fed creationist pseudoscience? What's the proper role of state science standards in American public education, anyway?

To get some answers, the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) conducted an in-depth survey of 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The good news: Current state science standards cover evolution more extensively than they did 9 years ago.

According to the report, 40 states received satisfactory grades for the treatment of evolution in their state science standards, compared to only 31 in Lawrence S. Lerner's 2000 study *Good Science, Bad Science*, conducted for the Fordham Foundation.

The bad news: Creationist language is still creeping into state standards, and is becoming increasingly sophisticated. Moreover, says the study, the "treatment of human evolution is abysmal," with only 7 states (and the District of Columbia) providing a comprehensive treatment

But do science standards play an important role in improving evolution education and science literacy?

The answer is a resounding "Yes!" say co-authors and NCSE project directors Dr. Louise Mead and Anton Mates. "Across the U.S., evolution education continues to be challenged and marginalized," says the

report. "Although a positive treatment of evolution in state science standards doesn't guarantee that evolution will be taught well, standards do provide a critical resource for teachers who want to teach evolution correctly. Standards are especially useful when biology teachers face protests from students, parents, and administrators who want creationism taught or evolution education suppressed."

According to Dr. Mead, "state science standards chart the course for science education in America, affecting curriculum, textbook adoptions, and ultimately what teachers are--and aren't--allowed to teach." If nothing else, says Dr. Mead, pro-evolution standards can persuade administrators that teaching evolution is not a political issue, open to negotiations, but rather is an educational necessity if America is going to thrive in the 21st century.

To see our story, go [here](#). [4]

The complete study, "Why Science Standards are Important to a Strong Science Curriculum and How States Measure Up," is in the journal [Evolution: Education and Outreach](#) [5].

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The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) is a not-for-profit, membership organization that defends and promotes the teaching of evolution in the public schools. The NCSE provides information and resources to schools, parents, and concerned citizens working to keep evolution in public school science education. We educate the press and public about the scientific, educational, and legal aspects of the creation and evolution controversy, and supply needed information and advice to defend good science education at local, state, and national levels. Our 4000 members are scientists, teachers, clergy, and citizens with diverse religious affiliations.

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