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"The Texas State Board of Education on Wednesday [February 1, 2017] voted preliminarily for science standards that would keep in language that some say opens the door to creationism," the Texas Tribune (February 1, 2017) [reports](#) [4].

At issue were four standards inserted into the Texas state science standards by members of the state board of education, without input from scientists and educators, during the last revision of the standards in 2009.

The objectionable standards called for students to analyze "all sides of scientific evidence" and to evaluate "sudden appearance, stasis" in the fossil record, "the complexity of the cell," and "the DNA molecule for self-replicating life."

The history as well as the pedagogical and scientific problems of these standards is [described](#) [5] (PDF) in detail by Ryan Valentine of the Texas Freedom Network, Ben Pierce of Southwestern University, and John Wise of Southern Methodist University in a 2015 report.

A panel of educators and scientists charged with streamlining the science standards for biology recommended the removal of the standards on the grounds that they raised issues too difficult for teachers to present and students to understand.

Karyn Ard, a teacher who served on the panel, told the board in November 2016, "These changes were purely based on the fact that our kids cannot master those [standards]," [according](#) [6] to the Texas Tribune (November 16, 2016).

The panel's recommendation was strongly upheld by teachers and scientists — "many of them University of Texas graduate students in biology fields" — testifying before the board on January 31, 2017, [according](#) [7] to the *Austin American-Stateman* (January 31, 2017).

At the board's February 1, 2017, meeting, however, the board voted 9-5 to restore language calling for students to "examine scientific explanations of abrupt appearance and stasis in the fossil record," despite the panel's recommendation.

The board also voted to revise rather than remove the standard requiring students to evaluate the "DNA molecule for self-replicating life": the revision would require students to "evaluate scientific explanations for the origin of DNA."

The board further voted to revise the panel's suggested "compare and contrast prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells, including their complexity" by substituting, for the last three words, "and evaluate scientific explanations for their complexity."

The panel's recommendation for the removal of a standard requiring students to analyze "all sides of scientific evidence" — the successor to the notorious "strengths and weaknesses" standard of the previous set of science standards — was accepted.

In a February 1, 2017, statement, Texas Freedom Network's Kathy Miller [lamented](#) [8], "Once again we see the board overruling and rewriting the work of classroom professionals and other experts who know better than anyone else how to teach our kids."

The board's vote was preliminary. The board is scheduled to hold a second public hearing on the revised standards, during which criticism of the problematic standards is expected to continue, followed by a final vote, in April 2017.

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