

Evolution education is a 'must' says coalition of scientific and teaching organizations

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17 organizations report on national survey to determine public views of evolution education

A coalition of 17 organizations, including the National Academy of Sciences, the American Institute of Physics, and the National Science Teachers Association, is calling on the scientific community to become more involved in the promotion of science education, including evolution. According to an article appearing in the January 2008 issue of The FASEB Journal, the introduction of “non-science,” such as creationism and intelligent design, into science education will undermine the fundamentals of science education. Some of these fundamentals include using the scientific method, understanding how to reach scientific consensus, and distinguishing between scientific and nonscientific explanations of natural phenomena.

“In an age when people have benefited so greatly from science and reason, it is ironic that some still reject the tools that have afforded them the privilege to reject them,” says Gerald Weissmann, MD, Editor-in-Chief of The FASEB Journal.

The article is based on a national survey of 1,000 likely U.S. voters. Survey respondents were queried on their attitudes toward science and scientists, their views on evolutionary science in the context of education, and their opinions regarding the means through which the scientific community can effectively bolster support for teaching evolution and related subjects. The survey revealed that respondents favored teaching evolution over creationism or intelligent design. The

survey also revealed that respondents were more interested in hearing about evolution from scientists, science teachers, and clergy than Supreme Court Justices, celebrities, or school board members. The survey also found that there is a relationship between people's understanding of science and their support for teaching evolution. Respondents were asked three questions: one related to plate tectonics, one related to the proper use of antibiotics, and one related to prehistory. Those who accurately answered questions on these subjects were far more likely to support the teaching of evolution in schools.

“The bottom line is that the world is round, humans evolved from an extinct species, and Elvis is dead,” Weissmann added. “This survey is a wake-up call for anyone who supports teaching information based on evidence rather than speculation or hope; people want to hear the truth, and they want to hear it from scientists.”

Source: Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

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