

Texas education board approves science standards (Update)

March 27 2009, By APRIL CASTRO , Associated Press Writer



Member Ray Nunez, left, from El Paso, talks with Rick Agosto, right, from San Antonio, during a meeting of the State Board of Education Thursday, March 26, 2009, in Austin, Texas. Texas science teachers will no longer be required to teach weaknesses of scientific theory, including evolution, under new curriculum standards tentatively adopted by the Board Thursday. (AP Photo/Harry Cabluck)

(AP) -- Texas will no longer require educators to teach weaknesses of all scientific theories, including evolution.

The requirements were approved Friday by the State Board of Education in a 13-2 vote adopting new state science curriculum standards that will be in place for the next decade.

In a compromise plan, teachers will be required to have students scrutinize "all sides" of scientific theories, a move criticized by evolution proponents.

The vote caps a week of impassioned debate that had scientists, teachers and textbook publishers from around the country focused on Texas.

Texas science teachers will no longer be required to teach weaknesses of scientific theory, including evolution, under new curriculum standards tentatively adopted by the State Board of Education on Thursday.

Supporters of evolution hailed the vote but were critical of amendments adopted by the board that they said could create new paths to teaching creationism and the similar theory of [intelligent design](#) in public schools.

If given final approval in a vote expected Friday, the new standards will drop a 20-year-old rule that requires both "strengths and weaknesses" of all scientific theories to be taught. Critics say the requirement is used to undermine the [theory of evolution](#) in favor of religious teachings.

The new standards, which would be in place for the next decade, govern what appears on standardized tests and material published in textbooks. As one of the largest textbook purchasers in the nation, [Texas](#) has significant influence over the content of books marketed across the country.

"Publishers are waiting to hear what to put in their textbooks," said Dan Quinn, a spokesman for the watchdog group Texas Freedom Network.

In approving a handful of amendments Thursday, the board "slammed the door on creationism, then ran around the house opening up all the windows to let it in another way," Quinn said. "We hope the vote tomorrow will reverse a lot of that."

In one amendment, the board agreed to require high school biology

students to "analyze and evaluate the sufficiency or insufficiency of [natural selection](#) to explain the complexity of the cell."

Board member Don McLeroy said his amendment was intended "to account for that amazing complexity. I think it's a standard that makes it honest with our children."

Federal courts have ruled against teaching public schools teaching creationism and intelligent design, which holds that life is so complex that it must have come from an intelligent higher power.

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