

UAB professor's book promises solution for teaching evolution without conflict

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University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Associate Professor Lee Meadows, Ph.D., is author of a new book that claims it's possible to teach evolution without offending students who have strong religious convictions against the theory.

In his book, *The Missing Link: An Inquiry Approach for Teaching All [Students](#) About [Evolution](#)*, Meadows, a Christian and science educator, writes: "For too long evolution has been denied its place in science curriculum. School policies driven by misunderstanding and fear regularly displace widely recognized principles of science. But without understanding evolution, students — no matter what their religious beliefs — will never achieve the level of scientific literacy they need to make sense of even everyday practicalities such as how human viruses work."

School districts, politicians and church leaders have debated for decades as to whether Charles Darwin's theory of evolution should be taught in schools. Educators who have taught evolution often have come under attack by students, parents and local religious leaders. As a result, many teachers today have resorted to one of two extremes to avoid arguments over the validity of evolution, says Meadows, who teaches in the UAB School of Education Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

"They either tell students 'check your religion at the door,' or they don't teach evolution at all," Meadows says. "This book attempts to take a middle-of-the road approach."

Rather than trying to convince students of the legitimacy of evolution, Meadows says, teachers should encourage students to examine the scientific evidence for evolution for themselves and guide them in exploring the scientific explanations for that evidence. This can include visits to science Web sites such as the Tree of Life Web Project

and reading articles about past and recent scientific discoveries that offer evidence of evolution.

Explaining to students the process by which scientists arrive at certain conclusions also should be a part of the science curriculum, Meadows says.

"Children have to understand evolution," he says, "but they don't have to believe it, and that is the key distinction that I have laid out in the book. So if a child asks if God made the whale, it's really an opportunity to talk about natural and supernatural explanations. You are not saying that one is better than the other, only that science is limited to natural explanations."

The book contains overviews of the theory of evolution and inquiry-based science teaching, lesson plans and a list of various Internet resources that educators can use in the classroom.

Source: University of Alabama at Birmingham ([news](#) : [web](#))

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