

VAST Position Statement

The Teaching of Evolution

The Virginia Association of Science Teachers, Inc (VAST) is a comprehensive professional organization dedicated to the advancement of superior science education in the Commonwealth. Consistent with VAST's mission to promote an environment in which all students experience science, in which teachers provide high quality science instruction, and in which members of the science education community are provided an avenue for communication, it is in the interest of VAST's membership and those whom it serves to have available a clear and comprehensive position statement on the teaching of evolution. As evolution is a key component of both the Virginia Science Standards of Learning and the National Science Education Standards, and, as Scientific American has recently referred to evolution as perhaps the most powerful idea in the sciences, the VAST Board of Directors accepts, endorses, and adopts the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) position statement on The Teaching of Evolution.

—Adopted by the VAST Board of Directors
December 2009

NSTA Position Statement:

The Teaching of Evolution

Introduction

The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) strongly supports the position that evolution is a major unifying concept in science and should be included in the K–12 science education frameworks and curricula. Furthermore, if evolution is not taught, students will not achieve the level of scientific literacy they need. This position is consistent with that of the National Academies, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and many other scientific and educational organizations.

NSTA also recognizes that evolution has not been emphasized in science curricula in a manner commensurate to its importance because of official policies, intimidation of science teachers, the general public's misunderstanding of evolutionary theory, and a century of controversy. In addition, teachers are being pressured to introduce creationism, "creation science," and other nonscientific views, which are intended to weaken or eliminate the teaching of evolution.

Declarations

Within this context, NSTA recommends that

- Science curricula, state science standards, and teachers should emphasize evolution in a manner commensurate with its importance as a unifying concept in science and its overall explanatory power.
- Science teachers should not advocate any religious interpretations of nature and should be nonjudgmental about the personal beliefs of students.
- Policy makers and administrators should not mandate policies requiring the teaching of "creation science" or related concepts, such as so-called "intelligent design," "abrupt appearance," and "arguments against evolution." Administrators also should support teachers against pressure to promote nonscientific views or to diminish or eliminate the study of evolution.
- Administrators and school boards should provide support to teachers as they review, adopt, and implement curricula that emphasize evolution. This should include professional development to assist teachers in teaching evolution in a comprehensive and professional manner.
- Parental and community involvement in establishing the goals of science education and the curriculum development process should be encouraged and nurtured in our democratic society. However, the professional responsibility of science teachers and curriculum specialists to provide students with quality science education should not be compromised by censorship, pseudoscience, inconsistencies, faulty scholarship, or unconstitutional mandates.
- Science textbooks shall emphasize evolution as a unifying concept. Publishers should not be required or volunteer

to include disclaimers in textbooks that distort or misrepresent the methodology of science and the current body of knowledge concerning the nature and study of evolution.

—Adopted by the NSTA Board of Directors

July 2003

The NSTA position statement and background

information can be found here: <http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/evolution.aspx>