

Clay Co School Board
January 17, 2008

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While the educated world has agreed for many decades that evolution is a proven process, and indeed can be called a 'fact', it might also appropriately be called a 'theory'...though a very well understood and proven one, like the theory of relativity, which has also been proven to be true.

Your resolution, as written, implies that evolutionary science would be somehow diminished if you label it 'theory' instead of 'fact'; in fact, it would not. In that sense, your resolution is not only poorly written, it is logically irrelevant and should be discarded as such.

It seems that the real and implied intent of your resolution is to diminish the value of evolution as a fundamental concept underlying all of biology, so that you and others might later seek to fill that classroom void with creationism or the newly coined "intelligent design", which is neither scientifically valid nor certain, but one of numerous myths about how humanity "got here".

Some important Definitions, in order of descending "provability", are as follows:
A Fact is a truth known by actual experience or observation; something known to be true:
Scientists gather facts about plant growth.

A THEORY is a more or less verified or established explanation accounting for known **facts** or phenomena: *the theory of relativity.*

A HYPOTHESIS is a conjecture put forth as a **possible** explanation of phenomena or relations, which serves as a basis of argument or future experimentation to reach the truth: *This idea is only a hypothesis.*

You might wish to use the word 'hypothesis' in place of your word 'theory' in your resolution, if you want your position to have any import at all.

A Myth is a traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes that serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people, as by explaining aspects of the natural world or delineating the psychology, customs, or ideals of society: *the myth of Eros and Psyche; a creation myth.*

I recommend that, rather than spending precious time and resources expanding our children's ignorance by diluting our science with anything else but science, the School Board create and support an integrated series of comparative cultural awareness/religion classes in Clay County.

In connection with the proposed resolution regarding Florida's new science standards, I have a couple of questions. First, the resolution requests that the state not present evolution as fact, although the resolution itself says the standards call evolution not fact but "the fundamental concept underlying all of biology. . . supported in multiple forms of scientific evidence."

Next it requests that the standards be presented through a fair and balanced approach. What is your definition of a "fair and balanced approach"?

Here are some points I hope you will consider before voting on the proposed resolution:

1. Gravity is a fact, even though we may not know everything to explain it. That evolution occurred is a fact. It is the "how" of evolution that is not completely known.
2. Under the scientific method, all conclusions are tentative. Every conclusion is true only to the best of our current knowledge. Nothing can be proven to an absolute certainty. As new knowledge appears, conclusions may be changed.
3. The fact that something is not currently known does not mean that it is unknowable, simply that we do not yet have the answer. A so-called "gap" in evolutionary theory may well be filled in in the future as we learn more.

Let me quote some statements about evolution (perhaps with tongue in cheek). From a Georgia judge: "This monkey mythology of Darwin is the cause of permissiveness, promiscuity, pills, prophylactics, perversions, pregnancies, abortions, pornotherapy, pollution, poisoning, and proliferation of crimes of all types." And the Creation Science Research Center has declared that its "research" has proven that the scientific model of evolution is responsible for "the moral decay of spiritual values, which contributes to the destruction of mental health" and "a widespread breakdown in law and order." Evolutionary theory is directly responsible for "divorce, abortion, and rampant venereal disease."

If evolution is this dangerous, perhaps we ought not to teach it at all. On a serious note, if you are to remain true to your statement on your website that you are dedicated to providing a quality education to Clay County students, I urge you not to approve the proposed resolution. I ask you to exercise some independent thinking rather than following other counties in lockstep. Dare to be different and make your decision based on evidence rather than emotion.

Julie P. Pihl

Linda Crawford

Evolution Speech

I ask the school board to reconsider their resolution to oppose the new science standards for Florida. The resolution, if passed, is bound to hurt Clay County's reputation as a source of educational excellence.

Florida is on the threshold of a dramatic improvement in the teaching of biology. Students will finally be taught the "how" of the development of organisms. They will finally be able to compete on a level playing field with students in other school systems.

A strong science education is essential for our children to succeed in life. It is necessary for our children to get into a good college. It is necessary for the best available scientific, medical, and technical jobs.

By passing this resolution, you will change the reputation of Clay County and its school system. It will start to become known for its objection to excellence in science education. It will send a message to parents, students, and prospective businesses that we are not interested in improving our science teaching.

It will tell them that Clay County is weak on education.

Submitted 17 Jan 2008
@ Clay County School Board meeting

by Jeff Allstadt, Certified Industrial Hygienist (retired)
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- Valedictorian in Science
- Triple major: Chemistry, Biology, & Environmental Science
- Minor in World Studies (4 year integrated study of world history, cultures, sciences, and religions)

I read your Resolution regarding the teaching of evolution in science class. It left me very disappointed in this governing body, and I hope you vote it down unanimously.

Florida students already struggle with a basic lack of education, you should not actively seek out ways to cripple them further.

There are roughly a dozen Florida Counties proposing similar resolutions. Many have as an eventual goal to conflate myth with the clear-minded teaching of science...always a patently bad idea for America's future.

This conflation has been attempted for a very long time, stretching back nearly 10,000 years of our recorded history. It eventually loses at every turn.

Why?

Because it's rooted in fear and ignorance of the unknown, and human beings are too curious to abandon the search for truth based on observable, empirical, & repeatable evidence; that is; Science and the scientific method.

It loses because we enjoy our cars, cell phones, computers, medical care, space travel, plastic, air travel, abundant food, nuclear power, flight, TVs, and of course, the things to come, about which we can only imagine. Our scientific curiosity and methods arose out of early myth.

This conflation lost in 1926 at the Scopes Trial, when Tennessee tried to unconstitutionally ban the teaching of evolutionary science throughout the State. Tennessee lost, all the way to the Supreme Court.

Because most people are essentially ignorant about history, cultures, myth and science, we often repeat mistakes, such as you're attempting to do here.

I hope you stem that tide now by voting No to this resolution.

Thank you.

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