

A Summary of the Topics Deleted from the Fifth Working Draft by the Board Majority

The Board majority has consistently minimized the significance of the changes they made to the science standards. However, Kansas Citizens for Science believes that their rationalizations have been misleading and deceptive, and should not be allowed to hide the seriousness of their assault on established scientific knowledge and principles.

The Board cover letter states that "microevolution" - change within species - is still in the standards, and that only "macroevolution" - the evolution of species - was taken out. To support this distinction, the Board majority copied this key sentence from Tom Willis's document: "Natural selection can maintain or deplete genetic variation but does not add new information to the existing genetic code." This statement is commonly used to support the beliefs that all species were created individually within the last 10,000 years, that only variation within species has occurred since then, and that evolutionary mechanisms capable of changing one species into another do not exist. Of course, this claim ignores vast amounts of information about genetic change as well as fossil evidence that in fact macroevolution has been occurring for millions of years.

The Board also deleted all references to geologic time or the Big Bang theory, even changing phrases such as "long ago" to "in the past," and changing "history of the universe" to "structure of the universe." The Board majority then added a number of pseudoscientific examples from young-earth creationist literature, such as an example asking students to show the weaknesses in the hypothesis that dinosaurs are extinct.

Perhaps most importantly, the Board majority made changes to statements about the very nature of science. They changed the definition of science from "seeking natural explanations for what we observe in the world around us" to "seeking logical explanations." One of the co-authors of the Willis draft, Paul Ackerman, has explained that this change allows supernatural causation to be considered as a proper scientific explanation for a natural phenomenon.

The Board majority has complained that they didn't want evolution taught as a fact, but merely as a theory, clearly showing their lack of understanding of the difference between a theory and a guess or hypothesis. The Fifth Working Draft defines theory as "a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world." Evolution and the Big Bang are examples of such well-substantiated and widely accepted explanations. Interestingly enough, the Board deleted the words "well-substantiated" from this definition, opening the door for guesses and hypothesis to have equal status with well established science.

And last, the Board deleted references to the environmental issue of global warming. They deleted the sentence "Evaluate the benefits of burning fossil fuels to meet energy needs against the risks of global warming," and replaced it with a sentence copied from the Willis draft: "What temporary changes in the atmosphere are caused by the cars and trees in our community?" Notice that this topic has nothing to do with evolution or the age of the earth, but that it is a subject which is often attacked by certain segments of society despite the compelling evidence for its seriousness.