



Potter County
Conservation District

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6/8/2021

TO: Karen Molchanow, State Board of Education Board
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Ms. Molchanow,


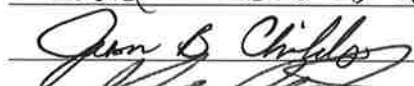

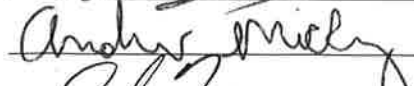

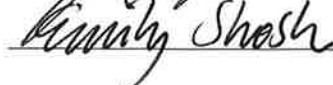
The Potter County Conservation District staff and board strongly urge the PA Department of Education to include the subject domains of environment, ecology, and agriculture in the proposed science education standards. It is imperative for students of all ages to understand the importance of protecting both our state's environment and our state's number one industry, agriculture. Because the new proposed education standards largely eliminate all mention of "environment, ecology and agriculture" for some age groups, we are concerned that teachers may not be able to programmatically engage students in meaningful natural resource discussions and relevant, real world learning. Environmental education must be present in schools, as it offers experiential learning, the development of critical thinking skills, diverse experiences in science, environmental stewardship, and much more. The health of the environment is integrally tied with the welfare of humankind; therefore students must be aware of the need for conservation and sustainability. The importance of these necessary 21st century skills is simply not reflected by current proposed standards. Nearly 20 years ago, Pennsylvania led the nation in the quest for environmental literacy, and now we are a far cry from that standard of excellence.

Very specifically, the proposed secondary science standards have four domains, and because none of them include the subjects critical to understanding Pennsylvania's ecosystems, middle or high school teachers may not include natural resource protection in their education curriculum. The inclusion of specific standards for environment, ecology, and agriculture as a fifth domain would allow for the integration of meaningful natural resource educational experiences. More importantly, PA needs to prepare our students for future careers in the fields of environment and agriculture, which may not happen as the proposed science education standards are currently written.

Additionally, vital environmental literacy guidelines put forth by the North American Association for Environmental Education are missing. These include, but are not limited to human systems; planning, decision-making and environmental action; evaluating environmental action and issues; and personal and civic responsibility.

Again, the Potter County Conservation District is urging the PA Department of Education to include environment, ecology, and agriculture in all science education standards prior to publication in the PA Bulletin. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

	Earl Brown, Board Chairman
	Jason Childs, Conservation District Manager
	Glenn Dunn II, Resource Conservationist
	Andrew Mickey, Dirt and Gravel/Low Volume Roads Technician
	Jared Dickerson, Watershed Specialist
	Emily Shosh, Communications and Outreach Advisor