



From: [Diane McCallum](#)
To: [ED, State Board of Ed](#)
Subject: [External] Comment on Proposed Science Standards
Date: Sunday, July 4, 2021 5:16:43 PM

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To whom it may concern,

I am reaching out with my comments regarding the proposed changes to PA science standards. I have worked as a PA public school educator for 18 years, first as a science teacher and as an administrator for the past 11 years. During this time I've served on several PDE committees related to the PSSA for science. Most recently I have become part of the PennSEL committee through my intermediate unit (IU12) and therefore will spend time over the next two years working to support districts and science educators to adopt the proposed standards if/when approved.

My biggest concern with the proposed standards is that this will be yet another state mandate that politicians will use as evidence of their support for public education BUT that mandate will be unfunded or underfunded. During the short time I've worked with the PennSEL committee, I've learned that MANY districts in our state do not allocate ANY funds for science education at the elementary level. The proposed standards will require science educators to think about their instruction VERY differently. That mindset shift will take time and professional development. At this time, due to many other PDE mandates, much of our professional development time is already spent covering these mandates (e.g., career readiness, suicide awareness, Safe2Say, etc...). I'm not sure that all politicians understand that the number of professional development days are specified as part of collective bargaining unit agreements. Days cannot be added simply because a new mandate comes into law. My district is lucky that I am part of the PennSEL team and therefore will receive frequent updates on the process. However I am the only representative from my county on my IU's team and many counties are not part of any PennSEL team.

My second concern with the proposed standards is the lack of an implementation timeline. I am very familiar with the concept of creating a new system while running the existing system. However, I think this will be a daunting experience for teachers, especially those in tested grade levels/subject areas (grade 4, 8, and biology). I am assuming that these teachers will be expected to begin integrating the proposed standards while learners will be assessed on the old standards. The existing standards are daunting and the proposed standards do not completely line up with existing standards in terms of suggested grade levels.

My third concern relates to the possible design of a new state science assessment. In my opinion, the current assessment accurately assesses student knowledge based on the standards, assuming students are reading on grade level. PSSA science committees I've been part of for the past 10+ years have continued to voice the concern about the assessment assessing reading ability in addition to science content. The proposed standards encourage an inquiry approach where multiple pathways are acceptable. I don't understand how this type of learning can be assessed with a multiple choice assessment.

I encourage all lawmakers part of the committee who will vote on these proposed standards to visit the schools in their areas. Talk to the science teachers. Learn first hand how science education is funded, how much time is allocated to science, and truly listen to their concerns in implementing these standards. Most importantly, lawmakers must fully fund this initiative FAIRLY. Funding should be based on the number of pupils in a district, with special consideration to the number of economically disadvantaged/special education/and language learners. Funding for this initiative should not be based on the current funding formula, which causes tremendous disparities between districts. Additionally, districts should not be required to apply for "grants" - if the state recognizes that districts need funds for successful implementation, those funds should be given without the additional paperwork.

I would be happy to speak to local lawmakers about these standards and would welcome any of them to come to the schools in my district to speak to teachers about the proposed standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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