

APPENDIX IV

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To: Dr. Richard Nilsen

From: Bertha Spahr
Jennifer Miller
Robert Linker
Robert Eshbach
Leslie Prall
Brian Bahn
David Taylor
Vickie Davis

Date: January 6, 2005

Re: Reading Statement on Intelligent Design

We have individually reviewed the statement you presented yesterday for presentation to our students at the beginning of the Biology unit dealing with evolution. You have indicated that students may "opt-out" of this portion of the class and that they will be excused and monitored by an administrator. We respectfully exercise our right to "opt-out" of the statement portion of the class. We will relinquish the classroom to an administrator and we will monitor our own students. This request is based upon our considered opinion that reading the statement violates our responsibilities as professional educators as set forth in the Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators promulgated by the Professional Standards and Practices Commission and found at 22 Pa. Code section 235.1 et. seq. As noted in the introductory paragraph of the Code, section 235.2 (a): "Generally, the responsibility for professional conduct rests with the individual professional educator." Further, the Code provides in section 235.2 (b): "This chapter makes explicit the values of the education profession. When individuals become educators in this Commonwealth, they make a moral commitment to uphold these values."

Central to the teaching act and our ethical obligation is the solemn responsibility to teach the truth. Section 235.10 (2) guides our relationships with students and provides that "The professional educator may not knowingly and intentionally misrepresent subject matter or curriculum."

INTELLIGENT DESIGN IS NOT SCIENCE. INTELLIGENT DESIGN IS NOT BIOLOGY. INTELLIGENT DESIGN IS NOT AN ACCEPTED SCIENTIFIC THEORY.

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I believe that if I as the classroom teacher read the required statement, my students will inevitably (*and understandably*) believe that Intelligent Design is a valid scientific theory, perhaps on par with the theory of evolution. That is not true. To refer the students to "Of Pandas and People" as if it is a scientific resource breaches my ethical obligation to provide them with scientific knowledge that is supported by recognized scientific proof or theory.

Reading the statement places us in violation of the following ethical obligations: Section 235.3 of the Code requires Professional educators to develop "sound educational policy" and obligates us "to implement that policy." Section 235.3 (b) makes it explicit that "Professional educators recognize their primary responsibility to the student and the development of the student's potential. Central to that development is the professional educator's valuing the pursuit of truth; devotion to excellence; acquisition of knowledge; and democratic principles." The same section goes on to provide: "Educators encourage and support the use of resources that best serve the interests and needs of students. Within the context of professional excellence, the educator and student together explore the challenge and the dignity of the human experience." Section 235.4 (b) (2) provides: "Professional educators shall be prepared, and legally certified, in their areas of assignment. Educators may not be assigned or willingly accept assignments they are not certified to fulfill." Section 235.4(b) (8) provides: "Professional educators shall be open-minded, knowledgeable and use appropriate judgment and communication skills when responding to an issue within the educational environment." Section 235.4 (b) (10) provides: "Professional educators shall exert reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions which interfere with learning or are harmful to the student's health and safety."

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