



# TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

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Robert Scott  
Commissioner

Dec. 13, 2007

To biology faculty members:

Thank you for your recent correspondence stating your concerns regarding recent events here at the Texas Education Agency. I appreciate the concern you have for Texas public schools, and know we all share the desire to provide the best science education possible to our students.

I am not at liberty to discuss the particular circumstances surrounding the departure of Chris Comer from the agency because it is a personnel matter.

In response to your concerns about science education in Texas, it is important to note the respective roles of the State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency. The State Board of Education, as the policy making body for public education, establishes what is taught in Texas schools through its adoption of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Agency staff members are responsible for implementing the curriculum standards adopted by the board. During the curriculum review and revision process, it is essential for Agency staff to provide a fair and open forum in which all viewpoints can be presented to the board.

The current curriculum standards require the teaching of evolution in our schools. The concepts regarding biological evolution are in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Biology:

**TEKS #7 Science concepts.** The student knows the theory of Biological Evolution. The student is expected to:

- (A) identify evidence of change in species using fossils, DNA sequences, anatomical similarities, physiological similarities, and embryology; and
- (B) illustrate the results of natural selection in speciation, diversity, phylogeny, adaptation, behavior, and extinction.

In addition, students in science from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade share the following science process:

**TEKS #3 Science Processes.** The student uses critical thinking and scientific problem solving to make informed decisions. The student is expected to:

- (A) analyze, review, and critique scientific explanations including hypotheses and theories, as to their strengths and weaknesses using scientific evidence and information."

The science TEKS will be reviewed and updated by the SBOE in 2008 but at this point, I am not aware of any plans to change these particular curriculum standards. Information will be available on our website at [www.tea.state.tx.us](http://www.tea.state.tx.us) as this process moves forward. I

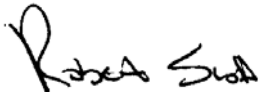
encourage you to follow the revision process and provide written and oral comment at the appropriate time to help us craft the best science standards in the country.

It is my expectation that agency staff members will be mindful, particularly on policy matters, that anything said will be scrutinized and may be interpreted as representing a position of the agency or State Board of Education. This controversy is an example of how closely policy makers and the public examine this agency's every word and action.

I know you understand and appreciate this position because in your correspondence your first footnote states that "the opinions expressed in this letter are not necessarily those of our universities, but rather our own professional opinions as Ph.D. biologists."

Thank you again for your comments and dedication to public education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "S".

Robert Scott  
Commissioner of Education