

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE TEACHERS

January 27, 2002

All students should be receiving daily instruction in science. The skills that all students need for success in the Mathematics and English portions of the FCAT are the skills that are the foundation of literacy. Science is the one curriculum that practices every skill of the standards for Mathematics and English. Science is the vehicle for any teacher to practice the skills of literacy; no other curriculum uses every skill to its complete potential. Teachers of science, particularly elementary and middle grades, have reported that their instructional time for science is being curtailed and even eliminated in an effort to concentrate on reading and math. We condemn the practice of depriving students of science instruction. The instructional time for science is guaranteed by Florida Statute Chapter 233.061, 232.245(1) and 229.57(3)(C)9. Any person endorsing such practice is in violation of Florida Statutes.

Teachers continually express a strong desire for meaningful, high quality professional development. Most secondary science teachers are certified in one of the traditional disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, or Physics. Elementary and middle grade teachers are often in greatest need of professional development. These teachers require our greatest attention. The availability of and the opportunities to attend high quality in-service in science are critical to their success.

The results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Third International Mathematics and Science Survey stir us to renovate the curriculum. It should be equally stirring that our youngest students consistently score at the top of the ratings. There are those who would deny those successful students the opportunity to grow and excel by depriving them of daily science instruction.

The Sunshine State Standards for Science is a comprehensive document describing scientific literacy. Science is a unique discipline in that it is not a collection of skills acquired and remediated. In fact, there is a separate strand of the standards devoted to the nature of science. The standards will soon be assessed using the FCAT test. The Florida Association of Science Teachers welcomes the opportunity to prove our students' abilities and to assess our efforts to teach science. We reject efforts to thwart the teaching of science by devaluing it as not part of the FCAT that counts. Standards count, and a sound and comprehensive education carries the day.

The Florida Association of Science Teachers, as well as the Area Centers for Educational Enhancement, The Coalition to Improve Mathematics and Science, and a host of other organizations and individuals stand ready to facilitate excellence in science education. As accountability becomes the companion to instruction and assessment, instructional leaders must be responsible for providing adequate time, growth opportunities, and resources for teachers of science.