Agreeing with Rulings Opposing Intelligent Design

As a research scientist, the wife of a science teacher and the mother of two Baltimore public school students, I applaud the bold ruling by Judge John E. Jones III on evolution ("Judge rejects Pa. policy on 'design,'" Dec. 21). In strong and clearly worded language, Judge Jones affirmed that "intelligent design is not a scientific theory and has no place in the science classroom." As a developmental biologist, I explore how a single cell, the newly fertilized egg, gives rise to the many different cells and complicated tissues and organs that make up the human body. Slight variations in the developmental program can produce a horse, a parrot, a fish or even a fly. These are challenging and obviously not new problems for science.

But intelligent design is a concept that is totally foreign to experimental scientists. Our mission is not to invoke an outside creator, but to explain complex processes by studying their physical properties. In the lingo of the lab, this means asking a good question, coming up with a possible explanation - a hypothesis - and then designing an experiment to test it. If the hypothesis doesn't hold, you had better come up with a better one and test it, too. Judge Jones' ruling that teaching intelligent design or other religious views is not only inappropriate but violates the Constitution supports this scientific approach, one that has led to numerous medical breakthroughs.

It is reassuring to know American children will be taught science in science class.

This letter was published in the Baltimore Sun on January 3, 2006.

Opposing the Introduction of Non-Scientific Beliefs in Science Classes

As a science teacher at _____, I am opposed to the introduction of intelligent design and other “alternatives” to evolution in science class. Evolution is a critical, unifying concept in biology and is supported by rigorous scientific evidence from many disciplines. Beliefs such as intelligent design are not scientific. They are not based on evidence and, unlike evolution, there is no way to test them. Introducing these concepts into science classes undermines science education by confusing students about what is and is not science.

Opposing Critical Analysis Resolutions

As a parent of school age children, I am very concerned about _____ School District’s decision to mandate the critical analysis of evolution. While critical thinking is an important component of science education, all ideas--not just evolution--should be carefully and critically considered. Evolution is an established fact that is universally accepted among scientists as the only scientific explanation for the development and diversity of life. Singling out evolution for criticism sends a message that evolution is a flawed concept and will impair students’ understanding of science. Mandating the “critical analysis of evolution” will do more harm than good to the development of students’ critical thinking skills. This is a risk we can not take.

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