March 14, 2018

Maine Department of Education
attn: Paul Hambleton
23 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

To whom it may concern,

I am the eighth grade science teacher at the Ridge View Community School in Dexter Maine. My students come from four area towns: Exeter, Garland, Dexter and Ripley. I have been a science teacher at the middle and high school level in Maine since 1985. Our district adopted the Next Generation Science Standards several years ago after we spent two years finding our way around these new standards. As a Maine science teacher and a parent of three children who graduated from Maine public schools, I strongly encourage the adoption of NGSS at the state level.

There are many ways that NGSS is far superior to the Maine Learning Results. The Maine Learning Results sits on my shelf of professional books and gathers dust. It serves no purpose other than a guide to what content should be taught at what grade level. Period. Here are four reasons I support the adoption of NGSS:

1. Considering content alone, extensive research was gathered before NGSS was written to determine student misconceptions and readiness. Therefore, the content suggested for each grade span is more manageable and much more appropriate for the developmental level of my students.

2. Learning about science involves more than memorizing content. Science requires understanding a way of thinking and approaching problems that comes from learning the process of science. NGSS includes eight practices; from modeling and experimental design to learning to ask questions and present arguments from data analysis. The practices, along with crosscutting concepts that make connections among different science topics are given the same emphasis as content. I will concede that it was daunting when we started crafting units that weave content, practices and crosscutting concepts together. What I very quickly realized as a veteran teacher is that this is simply what good teaching looks like. This is best practice. When students are doing science, they are more engaged and they are learning. Even if many forget the specific content covered in a particular unit, they will remember the understanding of the scientific process.
3. As the years have passed since the publication of NGSS and its adoption by more and more states, resources to help teachers transition to these standards are readily available, both online and through professional development opportunities.

4. The inclusion of Engineering Practices challenges me to find ways to incorporate even more hands-on problem-solving skills into my curriculum. This process has been fun for me and my students. But more importantly, I am now tapping into the interests and talents of a group of students in each class that otherwise would not be very engaged in a more traditional science class.

Please make the best decision for Maine students and choose the Next Generation Science Standards to replace the Maine Learning Results.

Sincerely,

Nancy Fogler Strauch
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Dexter, Maine