Hi Shari,
I got the message on the science listserv about reviewing the standards and asking for comments. I’m a little confused because it seems like the message is asking one to review the current science standards? The message didn’t ask for comments about the adoption of the NGSS? Maybe I missed something. Just finished the first day with students so maybe my brain is a little fried. In any case, I’ll throw out a few comments in hopes that they are appropriate to what has been asked.

Our current science standards are written so that there is a clear separation of science strands, concepts and skills (or processes). The NGSS are written to combine these 3 strands and are closely connected to how scientists work. If one teaches using the NGSS, students are engaged in the practices of science, learning the concepts, and will get an understanding about how ideas are connected to bigger themes (the cross cutting concepts). The science curriculum will be more rigorous, more appropriate to learning about how science is actually done, and help children learn how to become more critical thinkers which is what our society desperately needs. One other significant advantage with the NGSS is that they include engineering practices, helping students to become better problem solvers.

The rate of science and technological change is staggering. Our students need to be prepared for a world that is complex, where knowledge is growing exponentially and they need to understand how scientists use evidence to support their claims (including the reliability and validity of that evidence). With a stronger science program based on the NGSS, we are much more likely to have an educated population who can make better decisions (politically, privately, and for the good of our planet).

One major caveat: If schools are not held accountable for science education standards, I don’t believe that we can make much progress. I’m not a fan of standardized testing, but currently, the only focus for judging schools in our state involves these tests in ONLY math and literacy. Hence, the emphasis on two subjects and the literal exclusion of anything else, particularly at the elementary levels. I would urge the DOE to hold districts accountable for standards (based on the NGSS) in science. Otherwise, the quality of science will vary greatly among districts. Sadly, if it isn’t measured and publicized, it doesn’t matter.

In conclusion, we should definitely adopt the NGSS AND we should have districts be accountable for those performance expectations. Our students deserve nothing less than to be learn about science and engineering and be in a better position to make decisions about their own lives and their communities.

OK Shari - Not sure if this is what you wanted. Just throwing it out there in a probably “not so eloquent” way.

Maria