



TO: Laura Cyr, Federal and State Legislative Specialist (laura.cyr@maine.gov)
FROM: Tonya Prentice, President, MSTA
RE: Maine Science Standards Revision
DATE: November 3, 2023

On behalf of the Maine Science Teachers Association and our 200 members across the entire state, the MSTA board and I are pleased for the opportunity to submit this testimony relative to proposed revisions to the Maine Science and Engineering Learning Results.

Maine educators adopted our current set of standards within the last five years. My predecessor appeared before the EDU committee urging that you adopt these standards, we were grateful for that outcome. As educators of Maine students, MSTA feels strongly this current review should be for egregious errors only. This was the overwhelming response from the public to the initial call by the Maine Department of Education for input on possible revisions. No egregious errors have been found in the standards. With the fairly recent development of aligned instruction materials, any major shifts would likely cause a reset to the work done thus far. We remain confident that our current set of standards, well implemented, is accurate, correct, and vital for a strong, research-based science education for all Maine students.

For this proposed revision the department representatives required the Steering Committee and Writing Team to add the following aspects to our current standards:

- On the opening page of the Science, Technology, and Engineering Standards “Science as a Human Endeavor”
- Under each Strand, a “Students will” statement
- Wabanaki, Genocide, and African American studies suggested integration/phenomena within some of the “Further explanation” sections

The Wabanaki, Genocide, and African American studies addition was required by the DOE of the Steering Committee and writing team to fulfill the requirements of [LD 1664](#), which expanded [4706. Instruction in American history. African American studies. Maine](#)

[studies, Maine Native American history and the history of genocide](#). In reading this statute it is unclear both why these are being added to our science standards or how these will improve science education for Maine students.

These proposed changes fly in the face of the intention of the three-dimensional feature of our science standards; blending core ideas, crosscutting concepts, and science and engineering practices. To add content with no identification of the desired learning outcomes or professional training to introduce these topics successfully does not ensure the outcome of strong science education. While we appreciate the effort to include examples of socioscientific controversies in some of the learning standards, we have concerns about the inclusion of such examples in the middle school science standards (MS-LS4-2, MS-LS4-4). Such topics deserve to be presented and discussed with strong historical knowledge. The DOE is putting considerable resources into encouraging educators to use interdisciplinary instructional methods, we feel these topics would be excellent fodder for this pedagogical method. Yet to force these topics into an already full, challenging set of science standards, seems unnecessary and detrimental to promote quality teaching of these important topics.

It would be extremely beneficial if there were state-wide professional development on understanding and implementing high-quality science instruction for our current standards. This has yet to be provided since the Framework was introduced nearly 10 years ago. To help provide our hard-working educators with the implementation we urge the MDOE to hire and support at least one science education content specialist.

MSTA and our membership, as the end users of these standards, urge you to consider our stance on this revision of our standards: we can accept the “students will” component of the revision, we oppose the “Further explanation” additions and the addition of “Science as a Human Endeavor” as it’s written.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Tonya Prentice, MSTA President

Representing MSTA Board and members