

## 2008 UF COE Writing Contest Entry

*(This is one of 27 entries submitted in the College's recent writing contest on the topic of "What's Good in Education?". Visit the [writing contest home page](#) for links to other entries, including the winning one.)*

# WHAT'S GOOD IN EDUCATION?

## *New standards are right formula for science ed*

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The future of science education in the state of Florida is bright and sunny.

The Florida Department of Education has been working to elevate science education for all students in grades K-12 to reach "world class" status. The current Sunshine State Standards drafted in 1996 have been completely overhauled. The new science standards were approved by the Board of Education in February 2008 providing educators with a robust set of standards poised to provide students with the best science education.

The FLDOE assembled a team of framers who met with national curriculum experts. The framers then discussed what science standards should reflect in the state of Florida culminating in the charge delivered to the team of writers. Over the next several months, the writing teams convened and, guided by the framers' charge, developed the new science standards.

The framers and writing teams emphasized the need to not dilute the curriculum standards, but to provide educators the opportunity to explore the central concepts in greater depth with their students rather than racing through their lessons.

The new standards reflect the need for addressing the *Nature of Science* with greater fidelity in the curriculum. Students might recognize the *NOS* as the first few days in a science class where the teacher drilled the steps of the scientific method into their heads. Yet, it never seems to sink into the heads of students as it's repeated year after year from as early as elementary school all the way through high school.

The new standards are developed to make the *NOS* more robust and meaningful to develop scientific literacy among students. While the inclusion of evolution was hotly contested in public hearings and discourse, the *NOS* remind us that science is tentative. This leaves the possibility open to new scientific evidence that may change what we know and understand today, just as Pluto has been banished and reinstated from the Solar System depending the point of view of different scientists.

The next step is implementation of the new standards. The University of Florida teamed with the University of South Florida and Florida State to submit a grant proposal called Florida PROMiSE (Partnership to Rejuvenate and Optimize Mathematics and Science Education) and was selected to receive the \$5.9 million dollars from the FLDOE.

The science standards mark a major step towards making Florida students competitive in the global community particularly in science and provide teachers with the roadmap to provide strong classroom instruction. Students will have the chance to engage in complex topics with greater depth, develop essential critical thinking skills, and be well versed in the sciences regardless of whether they choose a career in the field.

The state of science education in Florida is not just good, but great.

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[Back to Writing Contest home page](#)