

Appendix Q

ASTA Letter of Support



Arkansas Science Teachers Association

March 17, 2014

Arkansas Commissioner of Education and Members of the Arkansas State Board of Education
Arkansas Department of Education
Four Capitol Mall, Room 304-A Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Dr. Kimbrell and Members of the State Board of Education,

The Arkansas Science Teachers Association (ASTA), a state Chapter affiliate of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), represents science teachers in grades K-12, partners with university agencies, and works alongside the Department of Education promoting effective science education and quality teaching. ASTA encourages rigorous curriculum design, including inquiry and problem-based strategies, and recognizes the importance of math and literacy components inherent in science instruction. Design, analysis, and communication are essential elements of success in any field of science. Accountability of all stake holders, as well as accurate and meaningful assessment of students, is also at the focus of ASTA's mission. For these reasons, ASTA endorses the Next Generation Science Standards and encourages the State Board of Education to adopt the standards in their next board meeting.

ASTA members are proactive and serve in education leadership positions at local, regional, state and national levels. Arkansas was one of the twenty-six lead states contributing to the Next Generation Science Standards and ASTA members hold positions on both the NGSS writing and review teams. ASTA's participation in curriculum design over the past thirty years has built a well-informed and far-sighted body of science educators within Arkansas. We are uniquely qualified to address the issue of adopting and implementing the Next Generation Science Standards.

In today's highly mobile society, ASTA recognizes the need for excellence in science standards that provide continuity in education around the state and nation. Students must have access to rigorous science curriculum regardless of background or state of mobility experienced prior to entry into Arkansas schools. ASTA recognizes the need for a competent workforce that sustains Arkansas for the 21st century. To accomplish this goal, the adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards will increase rigor in our state's science curriculum and support the development of STEM competent students. We believe these standards will provide our students the skills and the content knowledge necessary to increase success at both the K-12 and the collegiate levels and compete in national and global economies. These benchmarked standards focus on depth in the content areas and explicitly develop scientific investigation and engineering design skills. They are researched based and compliment the Common Core State Standards in the desire of producing students who are college and career ready. With all this in consideration, the Arkansas Science Teachers Association executive board, representing the state board and membership, wholeheartedly supports and strongly recommends the adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) as an important step in Arkansas' continuing efforts to prepare our students, our citizenry, for the global society of the 21st Century.



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The Arkansas Department of Education has done an excellent job creating opportunities for stakeholders to review, examine, and offer feedback on the Next Generation Science Standards prior to formal publication. We ask the board to act with haste in the adoption of these standards to give the state enough time to design and execute the adoption and implementation process, as it did with the Common Core State Standards, and to demonstrate our state's commitment to a strong STEM program.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and thank you for supporting Arkansas science teachers.

Sincerely,

Lynne H. Hehr
ASTA President

Alayna M. Duren
ASTA Past-President

Kathy Prophet
ASTA Executive Secretary