



NABT Position Statement

Administrative Support for Life Science Teachers

Standards-based biology education includes inquiry and experiential learning. To implement the National Science Education Standards, biology teachers and students need access to laboratory and field learning environments and instructional materials. Access to learning opportunities through laboratory and field work provides equity for diverse learners.

Professional Development. Science teachers should only be assigned to teach in their areas of strength. If that is not possible, teachers must receive ongoing professional development to support them in teaching outside of their content areas. Teachers should be expected to continue their professional development and supported financially. As professionals, teachers should be recognized for: taking courses; attending workshops, conventions and local in-service training; for presenting at conventions; mentoring colleagues; and for being active members of professional societies. Providing paid substitutes so that biology teachers can attend professional workshops and conventions should be part of the school budget. Administrators should also budget for subscriptions to science education journals for the school. Master schedules should include common planning time for science teachers, especially within the same subject and/or for mathematics and science teachers.

Equipment, Supplies and Space. Classrooms and laboratories should be provided with enough equipment, supplies and technologies so that all students have access to current laboratory learning. Funds should be budgeted for the incidental supplies which so many science teachers have had to purchase with their own money. For middle and secondary teachers, laboratory space should be made available to adequately implement state and district standards, at the minimum, 40% of the instructional time.

Safety. Schools and school districts must support teachers by conducting regular environmental safety assessments and timely clean-ups as well as providing all appropriate safety equipment and supplies, including functioning sinks and drains, fume hoods, chemical storage and refrigerators, and flat work surfaces. Class scheduling must adhere to school district safety indicators for classroom space occupation. A safe pre-college science classroom has no more than 24 students in the room with one teacher.

Preparation Time. Biology teachers should be given sufficient preparation time to implement a laboratory-oriented, inquiry science program. Teachers' school-wide duty assignments should be reduced to provide this planning and laboratory preparation time. Time should be allowed for laboratory setup and cleanup to take place during the school day.

Development of Biology Curriculum. Teachers should be encouraged and supported when they try innovative ideas. Biology teachers should be involved in determining the science curriculum for the school/district and be encouraged to provide significant input to this process, including selection and adoption of texts and instructional materials. Teachers should be encouraged to share new information and best practices with their colleagues in both formal and informal settings.

Administrators must recognize the importance of mathematics concepts and processes in standards-based inquiry biology learning. Time, resources, and support should be provided for articulation of biology and mathematics curricula K-12 through vertical alignment of the science curriculum.

Adopted by the NABT Board of Directors, November 2003