



June 11, 2024

The Honorable Josh Newman  
Senate District 29  
Chair, Senate Education Committee  
1021 O St. Room 6740  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Newman:

The National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) urges you to oppose the passage of Assembly Bill 2640, which would encourage California public schools to explore alternatives to dissection and would impose additional burdensome requirements on science teachers performing dissections.

**AB 2640 is duplicative of existing law and creates unfair bias against dissection**

Existing California law (*California Education Code EDC § 32255.1*) provides appropriate avenues for students to opt-out of dissection activities in favor of alternatives while respecting the expertise of K-12 science educators. We believe AB 2640 should solely be focused on ensuring current law is better enforced so teachers and students are educated on the options that already exist for students to opt-out.

**AB2640 imposes undue influence on students and schools to move away from hands on learning.**

AB2640 which “strongly encourage, by July 1, 2028, public schools to explore using effective alternative methods in lieu of utilizing live or dead animals or animal parts for dissection in a course of study” NSTA opposes regulations or legislation that would eliminate an educator's decision-making role regarding dissection or would deny students the opportunity to learn through actual animal dissection.

NSTA supports the decision of science teachers and their school or district to integrate dissection in the K–12 classroom. NSTA recognizes science educators as professionals. As such, they are in the best position to determine when to use—or not use—dissection activities.

**Teachers support the use of dissection in the classroom.**

Most teachers support the use of dissection in the classroom and continue to believe it is the most effective form of teaching. In a national study of 1,178 teachers' attitudes toward dissection (Osenkowski, 2015<sup>i</sup>), 70% of teachers reported that dissection is the best way to teach anatomy and physiology, and 60% disagreed with the statement, "dissection is no longer necessary to teach the life sciences." Sixty seven percent of teachers indicated that they would continue to teach animal dissection because students want to dissect, and 69% said that student performance is the most important factor in choosing animal dissection or alternatives.

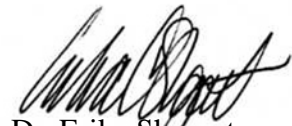
As cited in the NSTA position statement titled **Responsible Use of Live Animals and Dissection in the Science Classroom**, NSTA encourages districts to ensure that animals are properly cared for and treated humanely, responsibly, and ethically. Ultimately, decisions to incorporate organisms in the classroom should balance the ethical and responsible care of animals with their educational value.

NSTA encourages teachers to be sensitive to students' views regarding dissection, and to be aware of students' beliefs and their right to make an informed decision about their participation. Teachers, especially those at the primary level, should be especially cognizant of students' ages and maturity levels when deciding whether to use animal dissection. Should a teacher feel that an alternative to dissection would be a better option for a student or group of students, it is important that the teacher select a meaningful alternative.

For these reasons, we oppose Assembly Bill 2640.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Dr. Erika Shugart  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Science Teaching Association

---

<sup>i</sup> Osenkowski, Pam & Green, Che & Tjaden, Anne & Cunniff, Peggy. (2015). *Evaluation of Educator & Student Use of & Attitudes toward Dissection & Dissection Alternatives. The American Biology Teacher. 77. 10.1525/abt.2015.77.5.4.*