

August 20, 2008

USA TODAY Publishes Letter from SENCER PI

USA TODAY published a letter by David Burns, "Science education plays important civic role" on August 20th. The letter was written in response to an earlier piece and is featured on the publication's web site at <http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2008/08/science-educati.html>.

"Science education plays important civic role. The article "Our science savvy, under a microscope" highlights the importance of a high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education to all students. Such knowledge enables students to engage productively in their communities and contribute to the common good (Life, Aug. 12).

STEM education provides a basic understanding of science as a process (as a way of knowing with a set of assumptions about the world) that is, at its heart, intimately connected and supportive of democratic practice. Good STEM education is thus good education for our democracy.

To reinforce a fundamental point: Science is about something other than just science. It's about finding out how things work; why things work the way they do; why some things stop working.

Therefore, science education needs to occur in context.

At my university, the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement is addressing the very problem outlined in USA TODAY's article.

A project called Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities demonstrates what can be done when learning is connected to real challenges.

The courses focus on some of the most challenging issues of our day, ones that are critical for a democracy to flourish.

Students and faculty report that, with the project's approach, science becomes more real, more accessible and more civically important."

- From USA TODAY's website, permalink above.