



Science for All Americans

F. James Rutherford, Andrew Ahlgren

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In order to compete in the modern world, any society today must rank education in science, mathematics, and technology as one of its highest priorities. It's a sad but true fact, however, that most Americans are not scientifically literate. International studies of educational performance reveal that U.S. students consistently rank near the bottom in science and mathematics. The latest study of the National Assessment of Educational Progress has found that despite some small gains recently, the average performance of seventeen-year-olds in 1986 remained substantially lower than it had been in 1969. As the world approaches the twenty-first century, American schools-- when it comes to the advancement of scientific knowledge-- seem to be stuck in the Victorian age.

In *Science for All Americans*, F. James Rutherford and Andrew Ahlgren brilliantly tackle this devastating problem. Based on Project 2061, a scientific literacy initiative sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, this wide-ranging, important volume explores what constitutes scientific literacy in a modern society; the knowledge, skills, and attitudes all students should acquire from their total school experience from kindergarten through high school; and what steps this country must take to begin reforming its system of education in science, mathematics, and technology.

Science for All Americans describes the scientifically literate person as one who knows that science, mathematics, and technology are interdependent enterprises with strengths and limitations; who understands key concepts and principles of science; who recognizes both the diversity and unity of the natural world; and who uses scientific knowledge and scientific ways of thinking for personal and social purposes. Its recommendations for educational reform downplay traditional subject categories and instead highlight the connections between them. It also emphasizes ideas and thinking skills over the memorization of specialized vocabulary. For instance, basic scientific literacy means knowing that the chief function of living cells is assembling protein molecules according to the instructions coded in DNA molecules, but does not mean necessarily knowing the terms "ribosome" or "deoxyribonucleic acid."

Science, mathematics, and technology will be at the center of the radical changes in the nature of human existence that will occur during the next life span; therefore, preparing today's children for tomorrow's world must entail a solid education in these areas. *Science for All Americans* will help pave the way for the necessary reforms in America's schools.

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