

NMSR – History of Science Standards and 2003 Adoptions

<http://www.nmsr.org/nm-stds.htm>

## *New Mexicans for Science and Reason*

NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR

*Updated September 5th, 2003*

by Dave Thomas : [nmsrdaveATswcp.com](mailto:nmsrdaveATswcp.com) (Help fight SPAM! Please replace the AT with an @ )

NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR

# ***NEW SCIENCE STANDARDS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY NM SBE***

From Santa Fe, New Mexico; August 28, 2003

I just got back from the SBE (State Board of Education) meeting in Santa Fe. The new standards were passed, as-is, unanimously (13-0). Two members were absent. Only Joe Renick spoke for the ID side today [Thursday, Aug. 28th], and even he reluctantly endorsed the new standards, while still objecting to "dogmatic" content in areas. When he mentioned that the new standards would allow teaching of ID concepts, board member Flora Sanchez made it clear that the standards do NOT call for "teaching of various theories" and such. What they DO allow is true inquiry - for example, students asking teachers "How do they know that?"

I will file a more detailed report later. I expect the IDer's will try to make lemonade of of lemons, but their demands to reword key phrases, in the end, were defeated decisively.

Congrats to the many scientists, teachers, parents, community members etc. (Marshall, Kim, Malva, Richard, Marilyn, Art, Marvin, Greg, and many, many more) who have worked many months for these excellent standards. Special kudos to State Department of Education staffers Steven Sanchez and Sharon Dogruel for their incredible patience throughout this long process. New Mexico now has some of the best (if not THE best) Science Standards in the country.

Source: Dave Thomas, NMSR News

NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR

## DETAILED REPORT

# Science Standards Pass 13-0!

### Background

In 1996, Roger Lenard talked fellow State Board of Education (SBE) members into passing creationism-friendly school science standards. Dozens of scientists urged the Board to reconsider, but in the end, the very word "evolution" was stripped from state standards. After Lenard's appointed term ended, Marshall Berman won election to the Board in 1998. In 1999, the Kansas anti-evolution decision by that state's board drew international ridicule, and evolution was re-instated in New Mexico's science standards.

### 2002-2003 Revision Cycle Begins

In 2002 and 2003, the science standards again came up for review. A months-long process involved educators and scientists, and included from the beginning both mainstream scientists and Intelligent Design (ID) advocates. The efforts of the writing team were reviewed by "mega-teams" of specialists, and public comments were encouraged and considered by the State Department of Education (SDE). SDE staffers Steve Sanchez and Sharon Dogruel were very thorough and extremely patient in their attention to suggestions by teachers, scientists, and members of the public. They were bombarded by rambling dialogues from IDnet-NM, usually containing page after mind-numbing page of complaints and suggestions to fix "dogmatic" statements. [These IDnet-NM complaints included long discourses involving Robert Carroll's skepticism about aspects of "Darwinism." - See the August talk summary on pages 5-7 for the details.] Throughout the process, now-retired and ex-SBE member Marshall Berman consulted frequently with SDE staffers, and worked on review teams. Several NMSR and CESE members also spent time analyzing the standards, and suggesting possible improvements. NMSR president Dave Thomas sent the SDE a letter which showed why IDnet-NM suggestions should not be accepted, and explaining what many "critics of Darwinism" cited by IDnet-NM really think about evolution and creationism. In turn, IDnet-NM published the NMSR letter on their web site, and with a rebuttal (of sorts) by Michael Kent. During the process, dozens of revisions of the standards were issued. The version of May 27th, 2003 was put out for field review through June and early July. Public comments were solicited, and about a hundred were received. This version had excellent coverage of many science areas, yet still had a couple of problem areas, such as a mention of the "abrupt appearance of a wide diversity of multi-cellular organisms" that sounded like the classic Discovery Institute interpretation of the "Cambrian Explosion" as "evidence against evolution." (For one, the "Cambrian Explosion" lasted millions of years, and secondly, the notion that no transitions have been found between any Cambrian fauna is false. Some very

interesting probable Cambrian worm/arthropod transitionals have been discovered and published!)

## **IDnet-NM releases "Poll"**

The Intelligent Design organization IDNet-NM had the Zogby Polling Firm perform a survey at New Mexico's national labs and universities. In a July 28th, 2003 letter sent to all members of the State Board of Education (SBE), and also posted on the IDNet-NM website ([www.nmidnet.org](http://www.nmidnet.org)). IDNet-NM stated "*The Intelligent Design Network, inc., New Mexico Division (IDnet-NM), announced the results of two polls conducted recently by Zogby International regarding attitudes in New Mexico concerning the teaching of evolution and intelligent design in New Mexico's public schools. The first poll was of parents of schoolchildren K-12 while the second poll focused on the scientific community and included New Mexico's national labs and universities. ... In regard to the teaching of evolution in New Mexico, the overwhelming majority of respondents, both parents and laboratory scientists, favored teaching the evidence both for and against evolution by a factor of over 4-to-1. In regard to teaching intelligent design, parents and laboratory scientists favored teaching intelligent design by an overwhelming factor of 5-to-1. ...*" However, many serious problems have been found with the poll. David Harris of the American Physical Society, in an article titled "'Intelligent Design'-ers launch new assault on curriculum using lies and deception," (see <http://blogs.salon.com/0001092/2003/07/30.html>), says quite a bit about the vagueness of the questions, and why even pro-evolution scientists might be inclined to answer "Yes" to the soft-sell declarations. Harris adds this zinger: "*Perhaps the greatest problem with the survey is the response rate. Of the 16,000 employees, a mere 248 replied. This amounts to a 1.5% response rate, far lower than any other large scale survey I have heard of. Statisticians I have spoken with suggest that you need more than about a 40% response rate before you might begin to consider a survey valid....*"

Sandia Labs got so many inquiries about the poll that Sandia president Paul Robinson wrote a letter to SBE members on August 13th, 2003. Robinson wrote "*A recent news release issued by the Intelligent Design Network indicated Sandia's 8,000 employees were among 16,000 people surveyed about the issue of teaching creationism along with evolution in New Mexico schools. This release was very misleading. No such survey took place among Sandia's 8,000 employees. When we looked closely into this claim, we learned that of the 16,000 people at Sandia, Los Alamos and the three New Mexico state universities who we understand purportedly were given an opportunity to participate, only 248 people actually chose to participate in such a survey. We have no idea how these individuals were selected. A sample this small, from such a large population, has no scientific validity and should not be used to imply Sandia National Laboratories or its employees endorse the Intelligent Design Network's ideas. I am disappointed that the Intelligent Design Network chose to include Sandia National Laboratories in a news release based upon a bogus mini-survey. As one of the world's leading engineering and science laboratories, we at Sandia are very careful to apply accepted scientific methods to all surveys in which we participate. That is not the case with the survey in question. We did not participate in the Intelligent Design Network's survey and do not support its conclusions.*"

Los Alamos labs president Peter Nanos also responded, writing Joe Renick of IDnet-NM (with copies to the SBE president and others) on August 25th : "*The claims made in that [IDnet-NM]*

*news release are misleading. There is no evidence that all of our technical and scientific staff members received the so-called 'poll,' nor is there assurance that those who responded were actually scientific or technical staff members. .... I would appreciate it if you would refrain from associating the name of Los Alamos National Laboratory with your effort in any and all materials. ..."* The New Mexico Academy of Science weighed in as well. NMAS president Kim Johnson, in an editorial published in the Albuquerque Journal on August 28th, noted that the "4-to-1 for ID" result was not representative of New Mexico's scientists.

In John Fleck's August 17th Albuquerque Journal article about the "bogus poll," Fleck noted that *"Renick said Friday [August 15th] his organization plans to stop using the poll, saying it 'is turning into a distraction from the really important business of the science standards."* But, the "poll" was never removed from the IDnet-NM website (and still remains as of press time, 9-5-2003). Furthermore, Renick hedged his bets on August 19th, writing the SBE to say *"As I have stated before, in the interest of keeping the focus, IDnet will make no further use of the results of this survey in our efforts to promote integrity in science education. Some will take that as an admission to the charges of fraud. So be it. ... The undisputed facts are that Zogby conducted a survey. We got the results. We published them. We did not hand-pick the sample as charged. The math is the math. ..."* (Editorial comment: So, Renick said he'd stop using the poll, then tells the SBE that 'the math is the math,' and then criticizes mainstream scientists for a lack of integrity? What is this - "Spin Gone Wild!" ?)

## **SBE vote looms**

In August, the SDE released the final revision of the science standards. Upon examination, they were found to be much improved over the May version. For one, IDnet-NM suggestions to dumb down the standards, such as referring to evolution as a "model" and as something that only "claims to explain" biological phenomena, were all rejected, and were not included in the final draft. However, sections on physical, earth and space science and life sciences were re-organized, streamlined to assist teachers in implementation, and all-around improved. The reference to "abrupt appearance" vanished. And throughout, the standards emphasize the true nature of science as inquiry, a field where even "absolutes" can be challenged if the evidence leads that way. On Aug. 24th, IDnet-NM published a full-page ad in the Sunday Journal, saying that *"the goal of completely objective language has not yet been met,"* and that they support the final draft *"with reservations."*

## **The Vote**

The Instructional Services Committee considered the final version of the standards on August 27th. As David Miles of the Albuquerque Journal reported on Aug.28th, *"At Wednesday's meeting, supporters of the standards outnumbered those who preferred alternative language regarding evolution by more than 30 to three. Supporters included representatives of the New Mexico Academy of Science and the New Mexico Conference of Churches. 'There should be no fear of conflict between religion and science,' said the Rev. Barbara Dua, executive director of the conference. ..."* IDnet-NM speakers included Renick, Mike Kent, and the ever-rambling Paul Gammill, who may have just clinched the case against IDnet-NM's suggestions. SBE members Herrera, McClure, and Trujillo supported the standards as-is, while members Pogna and Barthel



## NEWS ON THE STANDARDS:

["Proposed Science Standards Include Evolution," Jeff Tolleson, The Santa Fe New Mexican](#)

["Debate Causing Big Bang," John Fleck, the Albuquerque Journal](#) (subscription required)

[Sandia Lab calls ID Poll "Bogus" John Fleck, the Albuquerque Journal](#) (subscription required)

["Evolution: It's sound and belongs in school," Editorial, the Albuquerque Tribune](#)

["Committee Backs Evolution in Schools," David Miles, the Albuquerque Journal](#) (subscription required)

["Creationists Tainting Real Science," Guest Editorial, Albuquerque Journal, M. Kim Johnson](#)

["Evolution Science Staying in Schools," Diana Heil, Santa Fe New Mexican](#)

[School Evolution Instruction Backed, Albuquerque Journal](#) (subscription required)

["Intelligence Went Into State Science Standards," Editorial, Albuquerque Journal](#) (subscription required)

["Schools' Science Standards Will Serve Students Well," Guest Editorial, Albuquerque Journal, Rebecca Keller and Michael Kent](#)

*NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR \* NMSR*

[\*\*NMSR Site Map\*\*](#)