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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

BILL RICHARDSON
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Dr. Marshall Berman
5408 Vista Sandia NE
Albuquerque NM 87111

Dear Marshall,

Thank you for your letter regarding the New Mexico Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards, and their interpretation by the Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico. While controversies over topics such as biological evolution persist, it is important to clarify what our standards and expectations are.

First, the inclusion of the principles and concepts of evolution in the New Mexico science standards is well established. Basic evolutionary principles form an important thread that runs throughout the standards. Our students should have a firm understanding of the processes and mechanisms of evolutionary change and the data and observations that support them.

Second, districts must design and implement curricula aligned to the standards. Full standards implementation requires that teachers be prepared to teach effectively and to consistently implement their aligned curricula. This means that scientifically sound content regarding evolution will be taught where appropriate.

Third, the state must remain neutral in matters pertaining to religion. In no way do the science standards support the teaching of notions of intelligent design or creation science or any of its variations.

Fourth, fundamental to science and the New Mexico science standards is the role of inquiry in learning about our world. There is no place in science instruction for the teaching of notions that are not or have not been investigated through rigorous scientific means or that are not considered by the mainstream scientific community to be consistent with sound scientific inquiry.

Finally, the standards call for students to critically analyze data and observations supporting conclusions. To be valid in both a scientific and educational context, such analyses must involve objective scientific arguments presented in a manner appropriate for the classroom and students.

I hope that questions regarding the teaching of evolution and the content of the science standards have been clarified. The standards convey accepted scientific knowledge and principles, provide a framework to support scientific thinking and practice, and open the door for dialog. The spirit of inquiry promoted by the science standards should be nurtured throughout a student's school experience.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Reif, Ph.D.

Science Consultant

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