

Updated September 5th, 2003

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

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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 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

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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). 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 supported IDnet's modifications. The key vote was committee chair John Lankford, who had been leaning against the new standards until just before the vote. Lankford liked the latest draft, and supported the new standards, which passed the committee 4 to 2. Dr. Rebecca Keller testified that, even as an ID advocate, she approved of the new standards. The unanimous vote the next day (13-0 on Aug. 28th) was pretty much a pro-forma affair. Just as in 1996, dozens of scientists descended on Mabry Hall: but this time, the outcome was far, far different. Member Hayes commented that he wasn't a scientist, and that he appreciated the fact that the scientific community (including national groups like the National Academy of Sciences, as well as local groups) took the time to review and endorse the standards.

Aftermath

Both the Albuquerque Tribune and the Journal endorsed the new standards in editorials. IDnet'NM's Rebecca Keller and Mike Kent also took a positive note in a Journal guest editorial on Sept. 4th, writing *"Evolution will be taught as the mainstream consensus view that it is, but these standards also will allow healthy discussion and critical examination of its claims. ..."* However, NMAS president Kim Johnson has observed that knowledge of evolution will actually be tested, while knowledge of "ID" will not: *"The standards are going to cause a number of teachers to actually have to learn*

something about evolution, and their students will be tested on it. Not as an unproven hypothesis, but as the well documented scientific theory that it is. The long term effect of these standards is substantive toward helping our young citizens to become scientifically literate - not just in the life sciences area, but just as importantly, they are outstanding across the board...."

Congratulations to all the people who worked so hard to get New Mexico world-class science standards. Especially Sharon and Steve at the SDE. I hope they get a bit of vacation!

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LETTER TO THE NM STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

August 18, 2003

To: Members of the New Mexico State Board of Education

Dear Board Members,

I'm a native New Mexican, a parent of two children who attended New Mexico schools through high school, and a scientist (in physics/math) with dozens of scientific and technical publications, including a cover article in Scientific American (December 1980).

I'm writing to encourage you to adopt the final draft of the proposed New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks for Science, as is, at the regular Board meeting (August 27-29). I have reviewed the standards, and they are something New Mexico can (and should) be proud of. I am pleased to add my endorsement to that of other individuals and groups supporting the new standards, including the Fordham Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the New Mexico Conference of Churches, and many more.

The critics of the new standards, especially the Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico (IDnet-NM), have said much about needing to change the standards to achieve "fairness" and "integrity." The standards are already fair and honest, and do not need further revisions. It's not "fair" when you've been patiently waiting your turn in a long line, and someone takes "cuts" in front of you right before you get to the teller or checker to do your business. What IDNet wants to do - dictate science curriculum for supposed "new science" that has not been published, debated, fought over, and finally accepted in the scientific community - is the same as taking "cuts." In this situation, it's the students of New Mexico who will be cheated. And, I find it ironic that the same people clamoring for "integrity" are the ones who routinely misrepresent scientific ideas and facts in an effort to promote their anti-evolution-at-all-costs ideology.

If you are tempted to support "compromises" offered by IDNet-NM, please be advised that there is no compromise for these people. For example, when the Ohio Board of Education felt compelled to specifically insert the phrase "The intent of this indicator does not mandate the teaching or testing of intelligent design" in Ohio state standards in December of last year, Jody Sjogren of IDNet-Ohio turned this around by declaring "We're the first state to have the words intelligent design included."

Please don't let IDNet-NM muddy the academic waters for years to come. Please send a clear message to teachers and students - that, even if they might not agree with evolution, they're going to have to learn about it in order to be scientifically literate.

With best regards,
David E. Thomas

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Statements of Support for New Standards

The New Mexico State Board of Education decided on August 27-29 on whether to adopt new science standards developed over the last year. Here is a list of groups supporting the new standards, and those opposing:

ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE PROPOSED SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS	ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSING THE PROPOSED SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS
National Academy of Sciences National Science Teachers Organization National Center for Science Education New Mexico Conference of Churches The United Methodist Church Math, Science, Technology Partnership NM Business Roundtable NM Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education NM Academy of Science New Mexicans for Science and Reason The Science Standards Writing Committee Groups of K-12 teachers A letter from the discoverer of the Hanta virus The American Institute of Physics (general statement on ID,evol.) The American Institute of Biological Sciences The Los Alamos National Laboratory Fellows Many more, not yet listed....	Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico

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Sandia National Laboratories says that the Intelligent Design Network (IDNet-NM/Zogby) "Lab Poll" is BOGUS!

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

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The Intelligent Design organization [IDNet-NM](http://www.idnet-nm.org) 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 at <http://www.nmidnet.org/PRESS%20RELEASE.doc>, (if you get a username/password request, just click CANCEL to get right to the page!), IDNet-NM states

"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 such 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. Even so, the low response rate by itself is not necessarily enough to destroy the validity of the survey. But there is no evidence to suggest that the 248 respondents were representative of the 16,000 employees. There are ways to check that the responsive sample is similar in characteristics to the total sample but none of that data was obtained and there are plenty of reasons to believe that the responders were not representative. Similarly, only 31 employees from universities completed the survey, out of the 500 asked to respond. At least the large uncertainty in the data obtained was mentioned but in the tabulated data, the sample size and what the presented percentages mean in terms of absolute numbers is not presented. This flaw is enough on its own to completely destroy the validity of the survey. ..."*

And, in a follow-up article titled **"Intelligent Design'-ers' deception deepens"** (see <http://blogs.salon.com/0001092/2003/07/31.html>), Harris notes *"I previously reported that the IDers claimed to send a survey to 16,000 laboratory scientists at Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. I spoke with representatives of the labs today and discovered that there are something like 14,000 total staff and only about half of them are laboratory scientists. Interestingly, the lab*

On August 13th, 2003, the president of Sandia National Laboratories, C. Paul Robinson, denounced the IDNet-NM survey, calling it "***bogus***," and affirming that Sandia National Laboratories "***did not participate in the Intelligent Design Network's survey and do not support its conclusions.***" Graphic and text versions of the Sandia statement follow.

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Text Version

Sandia National Laboratories
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National Nuclear Security Administration
by Sandia Corporation
P.O. Box 5800
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P.O. Box 969
Livermore, CA 94551-0969
C. Paul Robinson Phone: (505) 844-7261
President and Laboratories Director Fax: (505) 844-1120
Internet: cprobinATsandia.gov
August 13, 2003

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.

C. Paul Robinson

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RENICK RENEGES - AUGUST 22, 2003 UPDATE

After the Sandia letter knocking IDNet-NM's "Bogus Poll" came out, Joe Renick stated that IDNet-NM would STOP using that poll. From John Fleck's article "*Anti-Evolution Poll Called Bogus*" (Sunday, August 17, 2003): "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."

Source: <http://www.abqjournal.com/news/state/74133news08-17-03.htm>

HOWEVER, as of a week later (August 22nd, 2003), the poll is still posted, as it appeared originally, and with NO disclaimers, on the IDNet-NM web site.

[UPDATE **August 11th, 2006** - the IDnet-NM polling document has since been moved, from http://www.nmidnet.org/polling_data.htm, to a new location at <http://www.nmidnet.org/polling.html>. This page is prominently linked from the IDnet-NM Home Page at <http://www.nmidnet.org/> as the ninth menu option along the left side of every IDnet-NM page, "Polling Data." Like the original document, the new "Polling Data" web page **still** links to the Word document with the results of the bogus Sandia/Los Alamos "poll".]

FURTHERMORE, in a letter sent to all State Board of Education members on Tuesday, August 19th, Renick says IDNet will stop using the survey, yet still defends the results, saying "The math is the math." Here are some excerpts from Renick's August 19th letter:

"... I understand that the results of this survey represented bad news for some folks. **In the absence of any other ideas, attempting to discredit the survey and its sponsor is the last resort. In the face of the facts, it is the only resort. It is unfortunate that Dr. Robinson was misinformed as to the nature of this survey and implicated in this freak show.**

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. Our purposes and intentions are well-documented and bear no resemblance to the misrepresentations of those who are opposed to our purposes. As I said before, we believe that the results of the laboratory survey are an interesting indicator of attitudes of scientists in the national labs but are not necessarily representative of the entire scientific population.

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. There are legitimate questions about sample size but the effects of sample size are rigorously defined in mathematical terms (margin of error). One can speculate as to whether or not an on-line poll is truly objective. You can do the same about a telephone survey. Read the Zogby response for their position. They are the experts. ..."

MEANWHILE, the story grows more bizarre by the minute. Former SBE member and Sandia physicist Dr. Marshall Berman conducted his own informal poll of Sandia and Los Alamos scientists, and this is what he found:

Evaluation of Intelligent Design Poll of Lab Scientists and NM Universities

Dear members of the New Mexico State Board of Education,

I was shocked when I first learned of the surveys conducted by IDnet-NM. I spent 32 years at Sandia as a scientist, supervisor and manager and encountered perhaps a thousand scientists and engineers over that period. I can count on one hand the number of Intelligent Design creationists I knew in that period. It was clear to me that more information was needed to understand and assess the IDnet-NM survey.

I contacted staff at the American Institute of Physics and requested their assistance in learning how the poll was conducted by Zogby International. In addition, I conducted my

own poll of several hundred lab scientists, a few non-science employees, and many university professors. The results of this research are presented below. The conclusion is that the IDnet-NM poll is extremely misleading and biased, not statistically significant or even valid, and their conclusions are not supported by their own study or data.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marshall Berman
Past Vice President, New Mexico State Board of Education
Sandia National Laboratories, retired

Here are some excerpts from Dr. Berman's analysis:

There are about 16,000 total employees at SNL and LANL, less than half of whom might be called scientists and engineers. IDnet-NM did NOT send the survey to all of the labs staff. Furthermore, treating all the employees as scientists (as they do later in their letter) would be false. And even if all the employees were surveyed – which they were not – the return rate would be an insignificant 1.4%.

Using the information available from two NM science organizations, I requested survey data from several hundred scientists at SNL, LANL, UNM, NMSU, and NMT. 61 direct responses were received and 81 indirect (from responders polling their own colleagues and peers). Of these 142 responses, 137 (96%) never received the ID poll. **Not a single Sandia scientist or employee acknowledged receiving the survey.** One LANL scientist received the e-mail survey and replied in opposition to ID; one other LANL engineer was said to have received the survey (indirect). Two people from NMSU and one from UNM said they received the survey and replied negatively. So of the five scientists who received the survey, all of them opposed ID. Yet IDnet-NM reports an ID approval rate of 76-79% for “NM scientists” and 45-61% for “NM Universities.” ... it is quite clear that IDnet-NM selected the people to be polled and provided those email addresses to Zogby. We have no information as to how those people were selected. ... **The conclusions stated by IDnet-NM are not supported by the poll, the poll is falsely portrayed, statistically insignificant, highly biased, and presents a completely false picture of the views of National Labs and university scientists.**

I have personally interviewed Sandia scientists were were supposedly IN RENICK'S LIST of e-mail addresses sent to Zogby; these scientists did NOT ever receive the poll from Zogby.

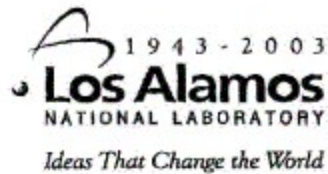
The heck with Denmark! Something smells really, really bad right here in New Mexico!

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LOS ALAMOS SPEAKS - AUGUST 25, 2003 UPDATE

Here's the letter Los Alamos National Labs director Peter Nanos sent to IDnet-NM, as well as SDE/SBE members. Nanos writes "*The claims made in that [IDnet-NM] news release is 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. ..."



August 25, 2003

Mr. Joe Renick
Executive Director
Intelligent Design Network, Inc.
New Mexico Division
Post Office Box 19065
Albuquerque, NM 87119-0065

Dear Mr. Renick:

A news release issued July 28, 2003 by your organization claims that 16,000 "scientists" at Sandia and Los Alamos National Laboratories, as well as at the three New Mexico state universities, were surveyed regarding teaching creationism along with evolution in New Mexico schools.

The claims made in that news release are misleading. There is no evidence that all of our scientific and technical staff members received the so-called "poll," nor is there assurance that those who responded were actually scientific or technical staff members. The "results" come from less than one percent of the total employee base, hardly a response rate than can purport to represent the opinions of "all scientists" at this institution.

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.

Sincerely,

G. Peter Nanos
Director

GPN:LT:vm

Cy: Michael J. Davis, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Department of Education
Adelmo Archuleta, President of the New Mexico Board of Education
IM-5, A150
DIR-03-344 File

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Hey, IDNet-NM - WHERE'S THE BEEF?

Date: Mon, 23 April 2002

From: Dave Thomas <nmsrdaveATswcp.com>

To: Michael and Merry Kent <mmkentATflash.net>

Subject: Re: on falsification

Hi Mike. I didn't get to say this last night as you left a little early, but here 'tis.

The difference between ID and/or evolution being able to explain different types of data (different outcomes) is a matter of degree.

In the molecular comparisons example I mentioned, it's pretty clear that the "ID Hypothesis" could be supported by evidence that similar biomolecules are all identical between species ("Efficient Designer"), or that they are all unique ("Meticulous Designer"), or that they come in hierarchical arrangements (vertebrates, mammals, bears, etc.). Also, clearly, it's evident that evolution demands hierarchical nesting of features ONLY, and would be falsified by either the Efficient or the Meticulous scenario.

I see where you're coming from re evolution also explaining "any" outcomes, though, such as convergent evolution. But that really goes toward the sheer capability of evolution to explain things about life. It appears that some lifestyles (say, marine vertebrate predator) demand certain features or body plans, and that's why ichthyosaurs, sharks and dolphins all look sort of similar in overall shape. Because evolution can explain this does not count as a "strike" against evolution, any more than should evolution's ability to explain how similar environments can end up hosting quite different creatures.

Another example is evolution's ability to explain stasis (slow or no evolution in large, successful populations), and simultaneously explain speciation (often the result of rapid evolution in small, isolated sub-populations). This is, again, exemplary of evolution's raw explanatory power, and should not count against evolution any more than the fact that Maxwell's equations explain what happens to an electron in a static electric field, versus a dynamic electric field, or a magnetic field, or what have you.

The difference here is one of Limitations.

If evolution was UNLIMITED in its capability to explain diverse observations -- if, in fact, there were no imaginable outcomes that could possibly falsify evolution -- then you might have a point. But such is not the case. The theory of evolution can NOT be twisted in such a way as to "explain", say, human remains fossilized unambiguously in Jurassic-era strata. Nor could evolution hope to explain, say, an odd bio-molecule used by several different species, but one for which the human and jackrabbit versions are almost identical, but the human and gorilla versions are very, very different. Either of these examples would be BIG trouble for evolution. But, nothing like them has ever turned up.

So it's really a matter of degree. Sure, evolution can explain quite different outcomes, but only within certain limits. It's certainly possible to imagine outcomes outside these limits, and these could potentially falsify the theory. But for ID, there are no limits. Any possible outcome can be explained as "Designer's Will." And thus there is no way to reject the ID hypothesis.

And that's why ID isn't scientific.

Sincerely,

Dave Thomas

Date: Mon, 13 May 2002

From: Michael and Merry Kent <mmkentATflash.net>

To: Dave Thomas <nmsrdaveATswcp.com>

Subject: Re: on falsification

Dave,

Below is the note I sent to your previous e-mail address. [earlier, in April of 2002] - Mike Kent

Dave,

I enjoyed the discussion last Monday evening. Feel free to join us on Monday's at 6:30 if you wish. Thanks for the note of clarification. Below are my thoughts on that subject.

I do not agree with the way you reason about this. The issue of plausibility/mechanism is completely absent. Your argument seems to be that both the naturalistic paradigm and design can "explain" (I would say "can rationalize") a broad range of observations, but naturalism has a more restricted space. Certain observations like polar bears in the Devonian would be difficult to rationalize within this view, whereas everything can be rationalized within the design paradigm. Thus the naturalistic paradigm is to be preferred on the basis of being more "scientific" since some observations could count against it.

In my view, this reduces science to not much more than story telling, and science as I practice it is much more than that. In my view the essence of science is the study of natural causation. That means mechanism and plausibility have to take center stage. We certainly do a lot with inferential evidences in science, but this type of evidence has to be considered very cautiously because it is very easy to see what you want to see in the data. In my experience, inferential evidences are worthless if plausibility is in doubt. Plausibility must be established first. If plausibility is established, then inferential evidences can play an important role but only when two important questions are carefully and thoroughly addressed. The first is this: are the data being presented selectively, i.e. is the author only citing the data that fit the proposed view and ignoring data that does not support his view. Second, are the data truly distinctive to one interpretation or may the observations be consistent with a variety of scenarios? The latter gets to the question of how risky/distinctive the predictions of a theory are. If all Neodarwinism demands is no polar bears in the Devonian, then it says very little. It is very difficult to do a thorough job of addressing these two questions, and examples abound of errors that were made because one or both questions were ignored or only marginally addressed.

The issue of plausibility/mechanism has to be addressed, it can't simply be assumed on the basis of naturalism if science is to be a truth-seeking enterprise. In my view there are many colossal challenges in biology (not to mention ultimate origins) that cast doubt on the plausibility of current naturalistic scenarios. The Neodarwinian mechanism can only solve certain classes of problems. There are experimentally determined fitness landscapes that are not in the class of problems that ND can solve. Irreducible complexity is all over the place in biology, (biochemistry, organs, origins of life, development). Specified complexity is an immense challenge that has not been addressed at all, as evidenced by the counter examples cited by Prof. Melott (pulsars and snowflakes). If the question of plausibility/mechanism is sidestepped, then the door is wide open to violate the integrity of science.

Some examples are: gas + energy = DNA from our museum's origin of life exhibit, the famous statement by George Wald "time itself performs the miracles", Carl Sagan's "the time available for the

origin of life seems to have been short Since life originated on the earth, we have additional evidence that the origin of life has a high probability", etc. I hope you see my point.

So in the absence of direct evidence or a plausible mechanism, very little confidence can be placed in any particular scenario pieced together from inferential evidences. The question of plausibility and mechanism have to be addressed. Furthermore I suspect that the inferential data are presented selectively and/or are not distinctive to the naturalistic view. However, it takes a lot of work to defend that. I'm planning to spend time on this during the summer. I'll consider the example you mentioned, the odd-biomolecule", among others. However, many observations are already very well known which are difficult to rationalize within the framework of the any naturalistic mechanism, such as the abrupt appearance of all the phyla in the Cambrian with no ancestors.

Other points:

Defining a possible causal explanation as out of bounds is not intellectually defensible if science is to be a truth-seeking enterprise. It may temporarily be an effective tactic, but it is not the way to discover truth.

Postulating what a designer would or would not do is theology. I prefer to stick to science. In my mind the scientific question is whether natural causation, as currently understood, is a complete (or entirely adequate) description. To me, current scientific knowledge indicates that it is not.

Ultimately, the naturalistic claim is immense (and getting bigger). I think the public is not convinced by inferential evidences. Nothing even remotely close to directly addressing the claim in biology has been presented. The essence of the claim is simply assumed, and I think the public is smart enough to see that.

I certainly think that the inferential evidences have to be considered. But it is nearly impossible to do the job right - to address the two questions above thoroughly, allowing the design paradigm to be given consideration. Both views are nearly infinitely elastic, that's why the question has to be decided on mechanism and plausibility, not inferential evidences.

I certainly think it is appropriate to say that various data are consistent with or support a naturalistic scenario. But this by itself is a very weak claim, and scientific integrity demands that evidence counter to the claim be cited as well. One should say: here is the data that support it, here are the problems, evidence against it, challenges. That is how I operate.

I certainly believe that we should study natural causation to the nth degree.

However, I demand the right to be honest and say when natural causation, as currently understood, is insufficient. It is also essential to recognize the role of philosophical presuppositions. Clearly scientific integrity shouldn't be violated trying to defend naturalism, as in the above examples.

Mike

Date: Thursday, 16 May 2002

To: Michael and Merry Kent <mmkentATflash.net>

From: nmsrdaveATswcp.com (Dave Thomas)
Subject: Re: on falsification

Hi Mike. Thanks for the comments.

It seems to me that your lengthy comments on "plausibility" and "mechanism" are an elaborate attempt to re-define the way science works so as to allow "design" into consideration.

Re "mechanism," many have been proposed. Genetic mutation is a mechanism. Genetic drift is a mechanism. Allopatric speciation is a mechanism. Natural selection is a mechanism. Chromosome doubling is a mechanism. And so on. And yes, these mechanisms have been shown to be eminently plausible. Evolution does have detailed mechanisms, and they are described in much more detail than the design "mechanism" ("God did it").

BTW, the Cambrian "Explosion" lasted millions of years - hardly what I'd call "abrupt."

I don't think that science is about story telling. But it IS about story TESTING. The stories (hypotheses) are tested against data (observations/evidence). If a story can make bold predictions about things as yet unobserved, and these predictions are continually verified, it becomes a good story. (Example: Darwin had no idea about the structure of DNA, yet the prediction, based on morphology, that the DNA of humans and apes will be similar, was verified in no uncertain terms). However, any good story must be capable of being falsified - that is, there must be conditions under which the story doesn't work. If you don't have that, then you don't have anything, because a story which can explain ANY set of outcomes reduces to something that really explains nothing.

I gave you several examples of observations which would immediately bring the "story" of evolution into crisis: for example, humans fossilized with dinosaurs, odd chimeras (like the lion/snake/goat of mythology), or proteins that are more similar between, say, humans and turtles than between, say, humans and chimps. Of course, millions of other conceptual examples are possible. It's not just about "polar bears in the Devonian." Evolution also prohibits polar bears in the Ordovician, Silurian, and Permian. It prohibits Possums in the Pennsylvanian, and Cows in the Cambrian. Unlike Design, which prohibits nothing (unless, that is, you can describe the "mechanism" which prevents the Designer from creating, say, polar bears in the Devonian).

Can you provide three examples of observations which, *in and of themselves*, would falsify the Design hypothesis?

If you can't, why should I be convinced that Design should be a viable approach, when it can't even be tested?

Regards, Dave Thomas

[Michael Kent's Response](#)

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"Do NM's Science Standards Embrace Intelligent Design?"

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

In the August 21, 2005 issue of the New York Times (Sunday edition), [Jodi Wilgoren writes](#)

"President Bush's signature education law, known as No Child Left Behind, also helped, as mandatory testing prompted states to rewrite curriculum standards. Ohio, New Mexico and Minnesota have embraced the [Discovery] institute's 'teach the controversy' approach; Kansas is expected to follow suit in the fall. ..."

Alas, Ms. Wilgoren is sorely mistaken. Her mistake appears to be in believing Intelligent Design supporters' claims about the status of state science standards, rather than, say, facts from the educators and school officials who actually developed those standards.

In the interest of preventing [Seattle's Discovery Institute](#) and [New Mexico's chapter of IDnet](#) from revising New Mexico's history, NMSR is pleased to present the following comparisons of the changes to standards Intelligent Design supporters ***asked*** for, versus what they actually ***got***. This discussion applied to [New Mexico's current Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards](#), which were approved on [August 28th, 2003](#).

Four days before this vote, on Aug. 24th, IDnet-NM capped months of intense lobbying of state education officials by publishing a [full-page ad in the Sunday Journal](#), saying that "***the goal of completely objective language has not yet been met***," and pleading for people to get involved.

To get an idea of what IDnet's "Objective Language" involved, we have used the document IDnet-NM posted on its website in the summer of 2003, titled "***IDnet-NM Proposal for Alternative and Added Language to the 2003 Field Review Draft Science Standards, dated May 27, 2003, Submitted to the individual members of the New Mexico State Board of Education, July 21, 2003.***"

Here follows what was in the spring standards draft ("Field Review Draft Standards"), the "objective language" changes IDnet-NM asked for, and what was actually passed by the State Board of Education on August 28th. 2003.

Did IDnet-NM get what they asked for? Do the new Science Standards encourage students to "embrace the controversy" over evolution? Look over what actually was adopted, and then decide!

Specific Strand, Standard	Field Review (Spring 2003)	IDnet-NM's Suggested Replacement Language	What was Adopted on August 28, 2003 by the NM State Board of Education
Strand I, Standard I	Understand the processes of scientific investigations and use inquiry and scientific ways of observing, predicting, experimenting, and validating to think critically.	Understand the nature and processes of scientific investigation and apply critical thinking to the activities of skeptical inquiry, observation, predictions, experiments, and validation.	Understand the processes of scientific investigations and use inquiry and scientific ways of observing, experimenting, predicting, and validating to think critically.
Strand I, Standard I, 9-12 Benchmark 1	Use accepted scientific methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data and observations and to design and conduct scientific investigations and communicate results.	Use accepted scientific methods to design and conduct scientific investigations; collect, analyze, and interpret data and observations; and communicate results.	Use accepted scientific methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data and observations and to design and conduct scientific investigations and communicate results.
Strand I, Standard I, 9-12 Benchmark 1, suggested new Performance Standard #1		Understand that observation and experiment form the basis of scientific investigation and are the principle means by which science establishes certainty or confidence in its findings.	
Strand I, Standard I, 9-12 Benchmark 1, Performance Standards	2. Design and conduct scientific investigations that include: * testable hypotheses * controls and variables * methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data * results that address hypotheses being investigated * predictions based on results *re-evaluation of hypotheses and additional experimentation as necessary * error analysis.	2. Design and conduct scientific investigations that include: *detailed observation of phenomena under investigation * formulation of a testable hypothesis based on a plausible mechanism * establishing controls and variables to isolate causal mechanisms and their effects * developing methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data * design, conduct, and documentation of experiments * testing hypotheses against results * new predictions based on results * re-evaluation of hypotheses and additional experimentation as necessary * error analysis * demonstrate repeatability and reproducibility of experimental results.	2. Design and conduct scientific investigations that include: * testable hypotheses * controls and variables * methods to collect, analyze, and interpret data * results that address hypotheses being investigated * predictions based on results *re-evaluation of hypotheses and additional experimentation as necessary * error analysis.
Strand I, Standard I, 9-12 Benchmark II, Performance Standard #1	1. Understand how scientific processes produce valid, reliable results	1. Understand the features of the scientific process that protect the integrity of scientific investigation and the credibility of its findings.	1. Understand how scientific processes produce valid, reliable results

Specific Strand, Standard	Field Review (Spring 2003)	IDnet-NM's Suggested Replacement Language	What was Adopted on August 28, 2003 by the NM State Board of Education
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 5-8 Benchmark II	Understand how traits are passed from one generation to the next and how species evolve.	Understand how traits are passed from one generation to the next and how the evolutionary model is used to explain the diversity of species.	Understand how traits are passed from one generation to the next and how species evolve.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 5-8 Benchmark II, Grade 6 Performance Standard	fossil record provides data for how living organisms have evolved.	evaluate the predictions of evolution by natural selection against major features of the fossil record.	Understand that the fossil record provides data for how living organisms have evolved.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 5-8 Benchmark II, Grade 7 Performance Standard	Explain how evolution is used to explain the diversity of living things.	Evaluate the evolutionary model and its ability to explain the diversity of living things.	Explain that diversity within a species is developed by gradual changes over many generations.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 9-12 Benchmark II, Performance Standard #8	Analyze the data and observations supporting the conclusion that species living on Earth today are related by descent from common ancestral species originating over 3 billion years ago.	Evaluate the data and observations that bear on the claim that species living on Earth today are related by descent from common ancestral species originating over 3 billion years ago.	Describe the evidence for the first appearance of life on Earth as one-celled organisms, over 3.5 billion years ago, and for the later appearance of a diversity of multicellular organisms over millions of years.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 9-12 Benchmark II, Performance Standard #10	Examine the data and observations supporting the conclusion that one-celled organisms evolved into increasingly complex multi-cellular organisms.	Evaluate the data and observations that bear on the claim that one-celled organisms evolved into increasingly complex multi-cellular organisms.	Understand the data, observations, and logic supporting the conclusion that species today evolved from earlier, distinctly different species, originating from the ancestral one-celled organisms

Specific Strand, Standard	Field Review (Spring 2003)	IDnet-NM's Suggested Replacement Language	What was Adopted on August 28, 2003 by the NM State Board of Education
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 9-12 Benchmark II, Performance Standard #12	Explain how natural selection favors individuals who are better able to survive, reproduce, and leave offspring.	<i>Comments: Tautological but this seems to be a necessary part of the evolutionary theory. It would be good to delete it.</i>	Explain how natural selection favors individuals who are better able to survive, reproduce, and leave offspring.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 9-12 Benchmark II, Performance Standard #13	Explain how evolution by natural selection can explain phenomena including the fossil record of ancient life forms and similarities (including similarities in DNA) among species.	Evaluate the predictions of evolution by natural selection against features of the fossil record of ancient life forms and similarities (including similarities in DNA) among species.	Analyze how evolution by natural selection and other mechanisms explains many phenomena including the fossil record of ancient life forms and similarities (both physical and molecular) among different species.
Strand II (Content of Science), Standard II (Life Sciences), 9-12 Benchmark III, New Performance Standard #1		Understand the cell as a highly integrated and regulated biological system incorporating information storage, information processing, biochemical processes, molecular machinery, transportation systems, and maintenance and repair systems.	

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Additional Resources

New Mexicans for Science & Reason ([NMSR](#)) and the Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education ([CESE](#)) co-hosted a workshop with representatives from the Public Education Department (PED), former state education officials, teachers and professors on "How Will New Mexico's New Science Standards Affect the Teaching of Evolution?"

This workshop was held on Wednesday, April 14th, 2004, and an on-line summary of the proceedings is available [here](#).

On July 20, 2004, the Public Education Department's Science consultant, Dr. Richard Reif, wrote to former State Board of Education member Marshall Berman, regarding attempts of local "Intelligent Design" advocates to persuade teachers that the new standards allow teaching of "alternate theories of origin.". In this letter, Dr. Reif states **"In no way do the science standards support the teaching of notions of intelligent design or creation science or any of its variations."**

State Board of Education member Flora Sanchez , during the hearing on the adoption of the standards (August 28, 2003), said explicitly that the newly-adopted standards were not intended to allow discussions of "Intelligent Design" in NM schools. As reported by Diana Heil of the Santa Fe New Mexican on August 29, 2003,"**Board member Flora Sanchez put a stop to mixed messages, though. She clarified this point: The state is not asking teachers to present all the alternatives to evolution and 'put them on an equal footing.'**..."

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