

Dec. 6th, 2007: School Board overturns Policy 401

The Rio Rancho Observer reports that "Science Policy 401, which attracted some statewide and national attention for its permissiveness in teaching Creation and Intelligent Design in science and biology classes, along with evolution, was put to rest by the Rio Rancho Public Schools Board of Education Monday evening. It is not expected to be resurrected, barring a shakeup of the board's makeup. With a jam-packed boardroom, about to exceed fire marshal regulations until Superintendent Dr. Sue Cleveland urged some attendees to sit in the hallways outside the room, 14 people spoke about the controversial policy during the public comment session. Final score: 11 for, three against rescinding the policy. The board had the final say, 3-2. ..."

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Dec. 4th, 2007: Discovery Institute Confuses Rio Rancho Board with "Darwinists"

Casey Luskin of the Ministry of Dis[covery Institute]information writes "....the Rio Rancho School District has 'rescind[ed]' its 'intelligent design policy,' which allegedly 'allow[s] alternative theories of evolution to be discussed in public school science classes.' But according to my understanding of the district's Science Education Policy 401 (revised April, 2006), it says absolutely nothing about teaching intelligent design. In fact, if board members rescinded this policy, then they rescinded a policy that protected against indoctrinating students in religious or philosophical viewpoints, encouraged sensitivity towards the controversy caused by teaching about origins, and required "objective science education, without religious or philosophical bias, that upholds the highest standards of empirical science." Only a Darwinist would rescind a policy like this. ..."

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Dec. 4th, 2007: Game Over in Rio Rancho, NM: Science 1, Wedge 0



Blogging on The Panda's Thumb, Marshall Berman, Kim Johnson and Dave Thomas report that " After producing division and confusion for more than two years in Rio Rancho (New Mexico) science classes, the Rio Rancho School Board formally terminated the ill-fated experiment known as "Policy 401." First passed in August of 2005, the policy did not mention "Intelligent Design" (ID) by name, but was perceived by the community and press as favorable to ID and creationism arguments, and as encouraging discussion of these "alternatives" to evolution. ... The head of the district's Scimatics Academy, science teacher Dan Barbour, had some of the most penetrating commentary: 'The policy has

done exactly what the [Wedge Strategy](#) is designed to do: divide our community, discredit the scientific process, and promote religious explanation as a scientific explanation.' ... "

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Dec. 4th, 2007: [Rio Rancho school board rescinds policy on intelligent design \(registration\)](#)

Education Week reports that "The Rio Rancho school board has repealed a policy allowing alternative theories of evolution to be discussed in public school science classes. The board's 3-2 vote Monday night reversed an Aug. 22, 2005, board decision to adopt the policy. The earlier board vote also was 3-2. Only two of those board members who supported the policy — Don Schlichte and Marty Scharfglass — are still on the board, and they voted against rescinding it. Board members Divyesh Patel, Margaret Terry and Lisa Cour voted in favor of dissolving the policy. Opponents have said the policy was a tactic to teach intelligent design — a theory that life on earth is too complex to have developed through evolution, implying that a higher power must have had a hand in creation. Nearly all scientists dismiss it as a scientific theory, and critics say it's nothing more than religion masquerading as science. Schlichte, head pastor at Rio West Community Church, said in a slide show presentation that most laws come from a system of beliefs, and that Nazis and communists used their belief in evolution to pass harmful laws. But Cour said, "Just because evolution is embraced by evil and unethical people, it does not mean evolution is evil."

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Dec. 4th, 2007: [Schools Repeal Science Policy\(subscription\)](#)

Elaine D. Briseño of The Albuquerque Journal reports that "The Rio Rancho school board rescinded a controversial science policy on Monday after an hour of heated debate, jokes about being lynched and a likening of evolutionary supporters to Nazis and communists. The board voted 3-2 to strike the policy, which allowed discussion on evolution to include other explanations for the origins of life. Those who spoke in favor of discarding the policy accused supporters of hiding their agenda, saying their real intent was to teach religion in science class. The policy was adopted in 2005. Besides board president Lisa Cour and members Margaret Terry and Divyesh Patel, those who spoke against the policy were primarily teachers from the high school and people who have ties to the science community in Rio Rancho and Albuquerque. In favor of leaving it in place were board members Don Schlichte and Marty Scharfglass, a few parents and Joe Renick, executive director of the Intelligent Design Network in New Mexico."" .

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Nov. 26th, 28th, 2007: [Rio Rancho schools could eliminate intelligent design](#)

KOB TV-4 reports that "The Rio Rancho School Board is expected to take up the issue of evolution and intelligent design at a December 3rd meeting. The board is expected to vote on whether to eliminate a policy that allows alternatives to evolution to be taught in science class. Currently, the district does allow the teaching of intelligent design, which teaches that the development of life is so complex it required an "intelligent designer" to guide the process. Opponents of intelligent design say that it is

July 26th, 2007: The Albuquerque Tribune, "[Commentary: Rio Rancho school policies influenced by ex-mayor need to be rethought](#)" by Dave Thomas

Now that he has resigned, it's a good time to ponder the legacy of Rio Rancho's ex-mayor, Kevin Jackson, whose brief tenure has been disgraceful. I don't pretend to be able to explain the mechanics of his [mind-numbing meltdown](#), complete with accusations of misuse of public funds and his unwillingness to begin coming clean about his use of public money. In light of recent events, I would like to encourage a re-examination of two of the man's prized issues: creationism and abstinence-only education.

...

Before his election as mayor, Jackson's wife, Kathy, served on the Rio Rancho Public Schools Board of Education. There, she joined with two other board members, who just happened to be pastors at Rio West Community Church, and passed [Science Policy 401](#) in 2005. This policy essentially paved the way for creationism by redefining science from something that must continually be tested rigorously to a mere collection of supposedly equally valid "interpretations" of the available data. Real science, of course, has a history littered with the corpses of thousands of discarded "interpretations."

...

Jackson and his wife formed the New Mexico Family Council years ago. It has identified itself as "one of 40 Family Policy councils throughout the country which work closely with (James Dobson's) Focus on the Family." Back when Jackson ran the council, the organization's newsletter [claimed responsibility](#) for [sending science teachers several dozen copies of the Intelligent Design tome "Darwin's Black Box," by Michael Behe](#). This was cited as a classic example of the Intelligent Design "Wedge" strategy in the book ["Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design"](#) by Barbara Forrest and Paul Gross. Forrest went on to become the key witness proving the connections of creationism to its successor, Intelligent Design, in Judge John Jones' [historic 2005 decision](#) in a Dover, Pa., federal court case.

...

The Family Council has fired Jackson and is cooperating with state investigations into financial irregularities. At the least, I hope someone is investigating how Kathy Jackson, the council's co-founder, was [allowed to vote on giving her own organization contracts to teach abstinence programs in Rio Rancho schools](#). Even with Jackson expelled from the council, the organization is still providing abstinence education through its "Best Choice" division. It's time for a fresh look at abstinence-only policies. A recent study showed that students taught only sexual abstinence ended up with rates of unwanted pregnancies no better than those of students who received standard health education. When these abstinence-only programs mention birth control, it is in a derisive way, much as creationists like to mention fossils only as a way to disparage evolution.

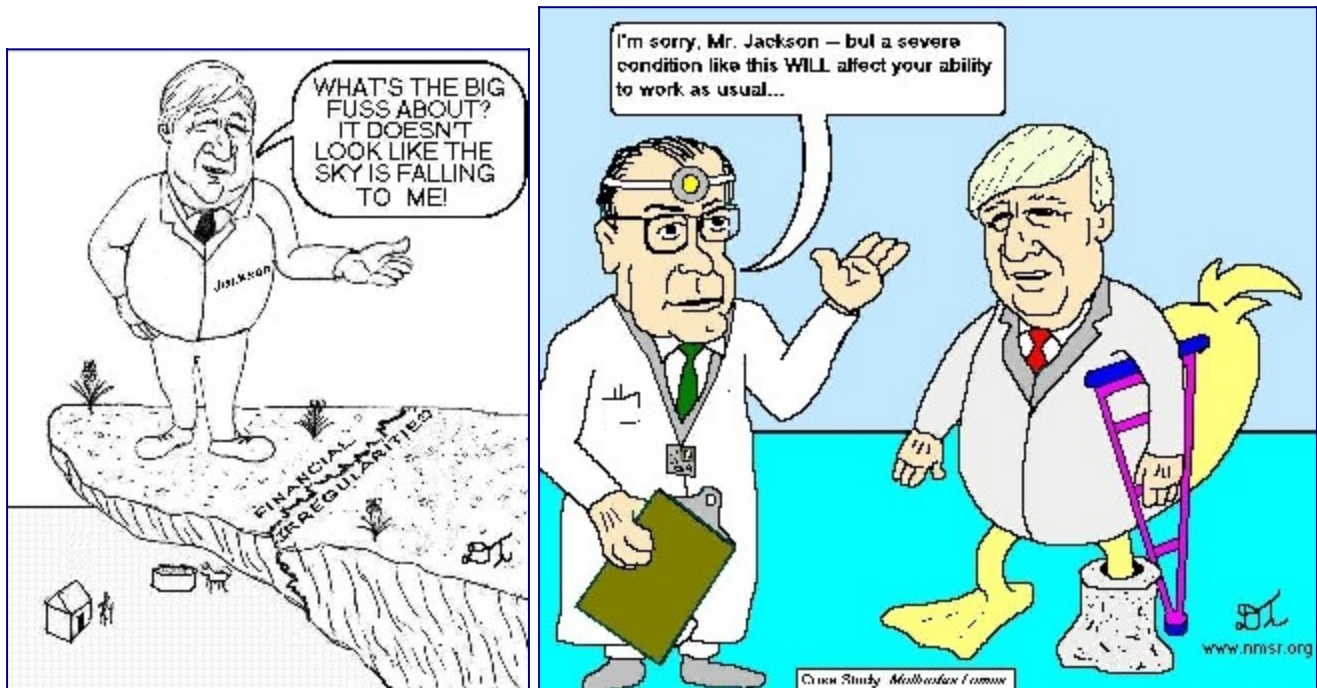
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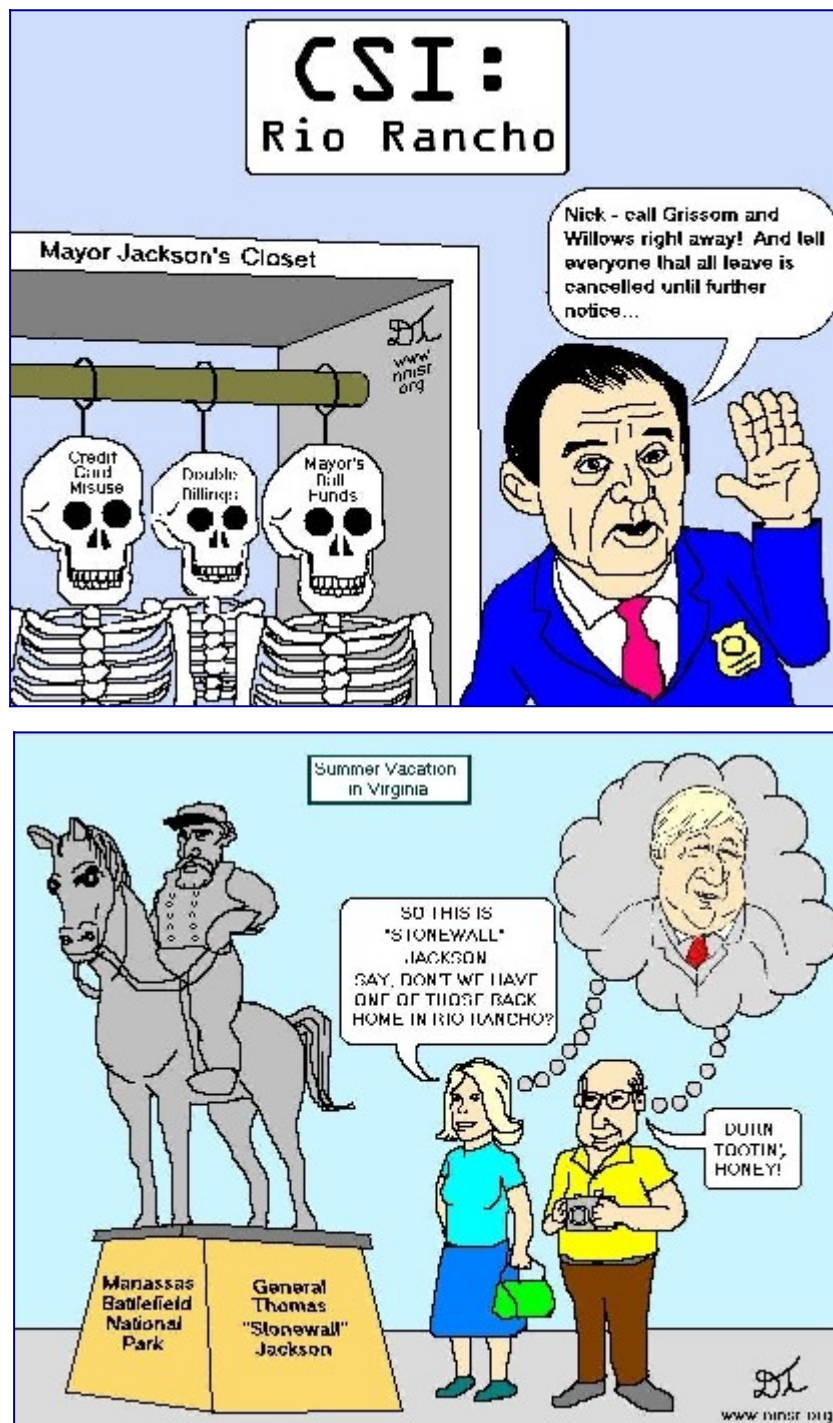
Rio Rancho's sex-ed policies do not meet state requirements for comprehensive sex education. However, the school board has yet to reconsider its stand. Board member Don Schlichte, one of the

pastors behind Science Policy 401, said in February that "I think we should let the state tell us we are wrong. We will go from there." Well, the state has since spoken. It's time for action. Science Policy 401 and abstinence-only education in Rio Rancho schools should be re-examined, not just because they were associated with the Meltdown Mayor, but because they are bad for the students of Rio Rancho.

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June-July, 2007: From the Rio Rancho Observer : Toons by Dave Thomas





The Albuquerque Tribune reports on June 8th that "More than two weeks after Rio Rancho city officials revoked their mayor's city credit card, many of the charges he made are still a mystery. ... Rio Rancho officials and police, State Police and the state Auditor's Office are investigating charges made by Jackson on his city-issued card. Jackson also was fired three weeks ago as director of the New Mexico Family Council-Best Choice. The nonprofit group is being investigated amid accusations federal grant money for its programs was misspent. Jackson has been unavailable for comment. ..."

Source: <http://www.abqtrib.com/news/2007/jun/08/questions-remain-regarding-rio-rancho-mayors-spend/>

In 2002, Jackson's group, NMFC, sent hundreds of copies of Michael Behe's "Intelligent Design" (ID) book "Darwin's Black Box" to science teachers in New Mexico, on UNM letterhead:

John L. Omdahl, Ph.D.
Assoc. Dean of Research
Office of Research
UNM School of Medicine
915 Camino de Salud NE
Albuquerque, NM 87131-5221

Science Colleagues,

A few weeks ago Dr. Michael Behe visited the University of New Mexico, NM Tech, Sandia Labs and Los Alamos Labs. He gave lectures on biochemistry and the role of irreducible complexity in biological systems. These thoughts are contained in his book "Darwin's Black Box" that contain [sic] a fresh approach to features of Darwinian evolution that are not currently explainable on the basis of non-ordered random chance events. Behe's perspective provides a good foundation for new experimental approaches that can provide answers to several non-validated aspects of evolutionary theory. It is in this context of a new thought paradigm that Behe's book will find eager readers within our science classes. Students who read his book will find the topic interesting and directly applicable to their studies in the biological sciences. Questions raised today will prompt our students' answers in the future!

Please circulate the book in the science department then have it put in the school library.

Respectfully,

John L. Omdahl, Ph.D.
jomdahl@salud.unm.edu Organized PBR

And in 2005, Jackson's wife Kathy sat on the Rio Rancho School Board as it approved since-amended "Science Policy 401," widely denounced as pro-ID in its original form.

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Feb. 22nd, 2007: "Cheshire Cat" Creationism in New Mexico...

I reported on the Panda's Thumb on "... a new group calling itself the 'New Mexico Science Foundation.' (<http://www.nmsciencefoundation.org/>) *The group recently sent a package of materials to science teachers in the embattled Rio Rancho School District, where the Intelligent Design/Creationist-friendly Science Policy 401 was adopted, and then amended after strong protests.* You wouldn't know who is behind this mailing from the group's website, which has quotes from Einstein, captions like 'Dedicated to the pursuit of the scientific method,' and links to bonafide science organizations, like the National Science Foundation, the National Science Teachers Association, the Institute for Systems

Biology, and more. ... Some colleagues and I thought it might be a new cover organization for the New Mexico branch of the Intelligent Design Network, or perhaps something done under the auspices of the Discovery Institute. We were wrong. The New Mexico Science Foundation website is the work of Bible-believing young-earth creationists (YECs), but you wouldn't know it just by looking at it. All that's left of its original YEC incarnation is a toothy grin. ..."

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Jan. 30th, 2007: Albuquerque Journal on "'Creationism' Measure Tabled"

Intelligent design was on the legislative agenda Monday, but it might not be there long. The House Judiciary Committee voted 7-4 along party lines to table a resolution saying public school teachers would have "the right and freedom to objectively inform students of any scientific information that is relevant to both strengths and weaknesses" of the evolutionary theory. ... Monday's discussion occurred during a simmering national debate on which theories about the development of life belong in science classrooms. A federal judge in late 2005 barred a Pennsylvania public school district from teaching "intelligent design" in biology class. Locally, the Rio Rancho school board revised its science policy last year after opponents said it was a clever scheme to insert religion into the science classroom. ...

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Dec. 27th, 2006: Rio Rancho Observer on "A look back: 2006, the year in review"

April: Although there was celebration over Wal-Mart and Rio Rancho Printing, there was debate at the school board meetings. The controversial Science Policy 401 came before the board for reconsideration. Critics said the policy opened the door for intelligent design. The original language called for discussion of discrepancies between science and religion, but the amended policy required only that students understand some people may disagree. Students can still discuss matters of religion in class.

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God Unleashes Hell on Rio Rancho? Posted Aug. 25th, 2006

Not long after Rio Rancho amended its back-door Intelligent Design Policy, summer monsoons began to clobber that city week after week, destroying roads and isolating neighborhoods. Coincidence? Not according to "Unconfirmed Sources," who report "God Unleashes Hell on Rio Rancho - Experts Say It's Payback for No Intelligent Design Being Taught As Science in Public Schools." [You will want to see what they found!](#)

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June 30, 2006: National Center for Science Education, "Rio Rancho School Board Amends Science Policy"

On April 10, 2006 the school board in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, voted 4-1 to amend their Science Policy 401. According to an article in the April 11 issue of the Albuquerque Journal the policy, adopted in August, 2005 by a 3-2 vote, had been strongly opposed by district science teachers and others

because of wording which seemed to promote teaching intelligent design. A board member who has opposed the policy told the Journal that it was "... a backdoor policy for intelligent design... a backdoor for religion." The article also observes that "Opponents of the policy, many of them teachers at the high school, have claimed the policy is a guise to force instructors to teach intelligent design. "

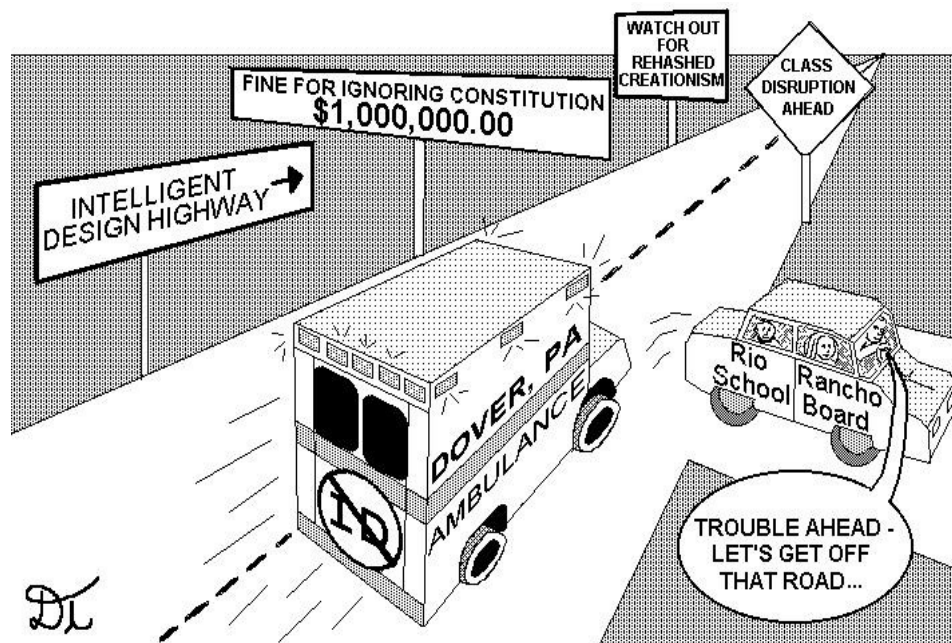
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April 27th, 2006: Albuq. Trib, "Behold, science: Why realm of facts, not faith, belongs in the public classroom"

Larry Spohn of the Albuquerque Tribune [editorialized on April 27th](#) that " The science teachers said, "Let there be light," and finally the Rio Rancho Board of Education agreed. Hallelujah! Under pressure from the teachers (and undoubtedly the community), the board voted earlier this month to eliminate its creationist-friendly policy in favor of the state standard. It simply acknowledges that "students shall understand" that people might disagree when it comes to science and religion. That's better but still not quite right, as courageous board member Margaret Terry, a Catholic, pointed out, as the sole vote against any reference to religion in the science standard. Praise Terry! ..."

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April 23rd, 2006: Rio Rancho Observer : Cartoon by Dave Thomas



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April 13th, 2006: School board alters science policy

Gary Herron of the Rio Rancho Observer [reports on April 13th](#) that " The way Rio Rancho Public Schools Board of Education president Lisa Cour figured it, there were three ways the school board could handle Science Policy 401 at its Monday evening meeting. She overlooked a fourth possibility, which was the action the board took: altering the controversial policy, after hearing 80 minutes' worth of public discussion. The boardroom was packed Monday with spectators, who overflowed from the

63-person limit into adjacent hallways. The school board voted 4-1 to change the final sentence of the policy (see new policy, page A-7). ... Don Schlichte seconded Scharfglass's motion. Both board members apologized to district science teachers, several of whom were in the audience, for writing the policy and passing it last August without consulting them. The motion then passed, 4-1, with Margaret Terry the lone dissenter. Saying she is Catholic, Terry denounced the policy as 'a back-door policy for Intelligent Design' and said it felt 'creepy to me,' although she proclaimed she certainly believes in a creator and family values. ..."

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April 12th, 2006: Albuquerque Trib, "Editorial: Bouquets & brickbats, Bouquet: Rio Rancho"

The Albuquerque Tribune [editorialized on April 12th](#) that " Intelligent design might be good religion, but it's not science, and the Rio Rancho Board of Education was right to vote against its outright promulgation in science classes there. The board voted Monday to amend a new, controversial science policy that allowed and, in effect, encouraged discussions of creationism in Rio Rancho schools as a valid, scientific alternative to evolution. ... So far, so good. But reports on the decision reveal a couple of causes for continued concern. First, creationists say they're taking the new policy to mean that students still must be allowed to argue for intelligent design in classes - and they intend to enforce that right. Second, some creationists continue to insist that the intelligent design movement is not a backdoor attempt to sneak religious education into schools via the science department. As to the second point, people should call the creationists' demurrals what it is - a lie, for which they sorely need to repent. ..."

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From the Panda's Thumb: "Rio Rancho Policy Amended" by Dave Thomas (April 11th, 2006)

"... While this victory is a significant battle, the war is far from over. Look for Intelligent Design pundits to continue spreading [The Lie](#) that New Mexico's standards are 'Intelligent-design friendly.' Sadly, this misconception is furthered by Briseño's interview with board member Scharfglass: *'Scharfglass said after the meeting that although the amended policy just restates exactly what state standards say, it is necessary to make sure the standards are being enforced in class. That standard is that students be allowed to discuss alternative ideas to evolutionary theory.'* I'm not sure if Scharfglass was misinformed, or if reporter Briseño just doesn't know what's in [NM standards](#). Nowhere do New Mexico's standards call for presentation of alternative ideas to evolutionary theory. ..."

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Text of Amended Rio Rancho Science Education Policy 401 (April 10th, 2006)

Science Education Policy 401

The Rio Rancho Board of Education recognizes that scientific theories, such as theories regarding biological and cosmological origins, may be used to support or to challenge individual religious and philosophical beliefs. Consequently, the teaching of science in public school science classrooms may be of great interest and concern to students and their parents.

The Board also acknowledges the conditional trust parents place in public education, as well as the requirements of the Constitution and New Mexico education law, that the classroom not be used to indoctrinate students into any religious or philosophical belief system.

Because of these concerns, this policy recognizes that the Rio Rancho Public Schools should teach an objective science education, without religious or philosophical bias, that upholds the highest standards of empirical science.

Therefore, science teachers in Rio Rancho Public Schools will align their instruction with the District's approved curricula and fully comply with the requirements of the New Mexico 2003 revised Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards. Age-appropriate emphasis will be given to Strand I, Science Thinking and Practice; Strand II, The Content of Science; and Strand III, Science and Society.

Students shall understand that reasonable people may disagree about some issues that are of interest to both science and religion (e.g., the origin of life on Earth, the cause of the Big Bang, the future of Earth).

Rio Rancho Public Schools

Adopted: August 22, 2005, Revised April 10, 2006

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April 11th, 2006: Rio Rancho Schools Amend Science Policy

Elaine D. Briseño of the Albuquerque Journal [reported on April 11th](#) that "The Rio Rancho school board voted Monday to amend a controversial science policy, which opponents said was a ruse to insert intelligent design into the science classroom. The board removed a sentence from the policy that deviated from state standards, and replaced it with language taken verbatim from the standards. The sentence that was removed was seen by many opponents as a way to slip religion into the classroom whenever teachers were discussing evolution. The two board members who introduced the policy, Don Schlichte and Marty Scharfglass, also apologized to the science teachers at the high school for not consulting them before proposing and then adopting the policy last summer. 'When we brought the policy forward, we should have talked to the science staff,' Scharfglass said. 'It was a mistake not to do that.' An opponent of the original policy, Rio Rancho High School SciMatics Academy head Dan Barbour, lauded the board's action after the meeting. 'It's a decision that brings the community together,' he said. 'It's a victory for both sides. It retains the emphasis on critical thinking and removes the language with religious undertones.' Scharfglass said after the meeting that although the amended policy just restates exactly what state standards say, it is necessary to make sure the standards are being enforced in class. [That standard is that students be allowed to discuss alternative ideas to evolutionary theory.](#) ... More than 100 people packed the meeting room and overflowed into the hallway to hear the

board's discussion. More than 30 people spoke, with those supporting and those opposing the policy about even. The change made to the policy followed comments from Rio Rancho Superintendent Sue Cleveland. She said the most concern and controversy over the policy arose from the sentence: 'When appropriate and consistent with the New Mexico Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards, discussions about issues that are of interest to both science and individual religious and philosophical beliefs will acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about the meaning and interpretation of data.' 'Most of the discussion was that this change in language from the state standards opened the door to different interpretations of the standards,' she said. A motion by Scharfglass proposed replacing that sentence with one taken verbatim from the state standards: 'Students shall understand that reasonable people may disagree about some issues that are of interest to both science and religion (e.g., the origin of life on earth, the cause of the big bang, the future of the earth).' The board approved the motion 4-1, with only Margaret Terry voting against it. Board president Lisa Cour, who opposed the policy when it was adopted in August, said she wanted it to go away, but in the spirit of compromise would support it with the amendment. Terry said even though she is a practicing Catholic, she could not support the policy, even with the amendment. 'In my gut, I feel this is a backdoor policy for intelligent design,' Terry said before the vote. 'This policy is not honest because it is a backdoor for religion. I don't want religion in public school. That belongs at home or in the church.' ..."

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March 20th, 2006: School Board may Reconsider Science Policy 401

Gary Herron of the Rio Rancho Observer [reports on March 20th](#) that "Rio Rancho Public Schools' controversial Science Policy 401, which was approved by the school board in August, will come before the board again at its next meeting, slated for 6 p.m. on April 10. Superintendent Dr. Sue Cleveland said after Thursday's board meeting that the board had promised to revisit the policy, which many say pushes the teaching of Creationism or Intelligent Design, in the spring. It is possible the board will overturn the policy at that meeting. ..."

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March 18th, 2006: New Rio Rancho Mayor Kevin Jackson's organization, NMFC, supports Intelligent Design

Kevin Jackson was elected mayor of Rio Rancho, NM on March 7, 2006. His wife, Kathy Jackson, was one of the Rio Rancho School Board members who supported adoption of Science Policy 401.

In 2002, colleagues of the New Mexico Family Council ([NMFC](#)), for which Kevin Jackson is Founder and Executive Director, and for which Kathy Jackson is Co-Founder and Operations Director, spent considerable funds getting copies of Michael Behe's Intelligent Design book "Darwin's Black Box" into the hands of science teachers across New Mexico.

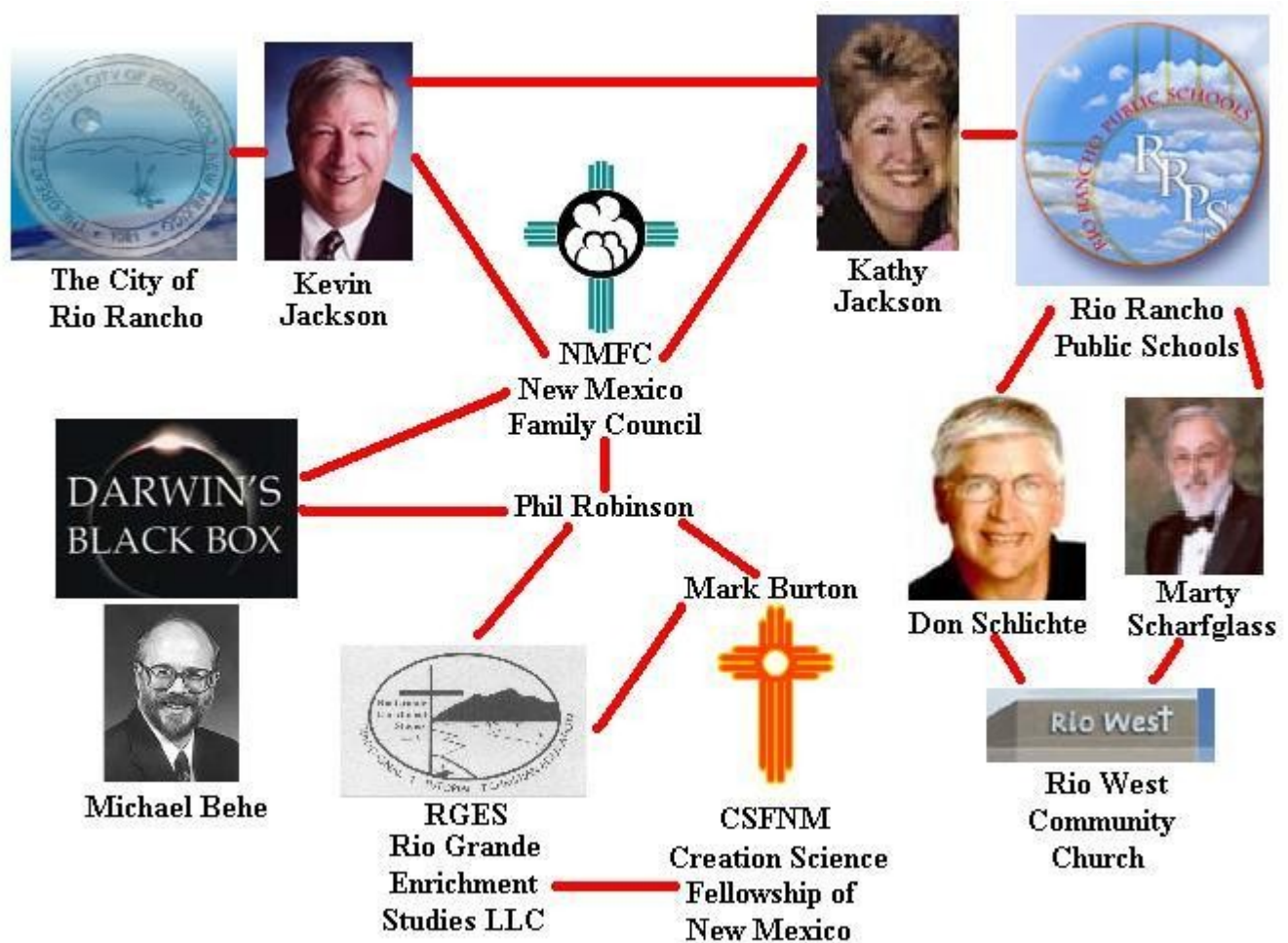
NMFC works with Rio Grande Enrichment Studies, L.L.C. ([RGES](#)), a pro-creationism home schooling site maintained by Mark Burton, who is also active at Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico ([CSFNM](#))

From the 28 Feb 2005 RGES News: "Kevin Jackson is also lobbying for pro-family issues this session. Please pray for unity among conservative Christians. ..."

Source: <http://www.rges.cc/news/050228.htm>

More from the 4 Jan 2006 RGES News: "* KNME scheduled to air Unlocking the Mystery of Life and later canceled it. Recognizing our Creator in science continues to be a national conflict with NM at the forefront. Our founding principles in the Declaration of Independence had no reservation about acknowledging our Creator - '... all men are created equal ... endowed by their Creator.' Other PBS stations (e.g., Portales) air this program and Privileged Planet. * Rio Rancho School Board passes measure allowing students to discuss alternatives to the theory of evolution. Federal judge bans Intelligent Design in PA public schools. ..."

Source: <http://www.rges.cc/news/060104.htm>



It's starting to look like a cozy club!

RECAP

[NMFC](#) = New Mexico Family Council

[CSFNM](#) = Creation Science Fellowship of New Mexico

RGES = Rio Grande Enrichment Studies LLC

IDnet-NM = Intelligent Design Network of New Mexico

AiG = Answers in Genesis ("Upholding the Authority of the Bible from the Very First Verse")

RWCC = Rio West Community Church

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March 16th, 2006: Rio Rancho Labor Relations Board: School District, Union need to Deal with Policy 401 Issues.

Elaine D. Briseño of the Albuquerque Journal reported on March 16th that "The debate over a recently adopted science policy relating to evolution in the Rio Rancho School District surfaced again Wednesday. Andrew Lotrich, lawyer for the district's school employees union, appeared before the Rio Rancho Labor Relations Board to learn the fate of a complaint he filed in August, shortly after the policy was adopted. It claimed the school board should have addressed the impact the controversial policy would have on teachers before implementing it. Lotrich asked the labor relations board to support the union's position. 'Teachers could not address the impact,' Lotrich told the labor relations board. 'There was not time to discuss what this would look like in the classroom.' The labor relations board, however, dismissed the complaint, saying the issue should be dealt with by the district and the union at the negotiating table. The policy, adopted by the school board in August, opened the door for discussion of alternative ideas during the teaching of evolution in science class. Supporters said it would ensure students follow the scientific principles of critical thinking. Opponents claim it is a way to slip religion into the classroom, allowing the introduction of the idea of intelligent design. The concept of intelligent design is that life forms are too complex to be explained solely by Darwinian evolutionary theory. In a later interview with the media, Lotrich said the policy had created confusion and frustration in the classroom. 'The majority of science instructors in Rio Rancho are opposed to the policy,' Lotrich said. 'It's disruptive if students want to talk about Bible verses.' He said it had an impact on a teacher's ability to teach to standards because all the interruptions are taking away valuable class time. He said the state's collective bargaining law required the district to discuss policies with the union that would have an impact on teachers. Some teachers have even threatened to quit because of the policy, he said. ... The school board was scheduled to review the policy at its March 13 meeting. However, that meeting was postponed until tonight, so the policy discussion was moved to the April 10 meeting.

Source: http://www.abqjournal.com/riorancho/442244west_news03-16-06.htm (subscription)

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March 15th, 2006: Albuquerque Tribune Editorial, "Mayor-elect's pledge alleviates concerns."

The Trib opined "Best of luck to Rio Rancho Mayor-elect Kevin Jackson, whose victory in last week's election puts him in the driver's seat of that city at a crucial period in time. Clearly Jackson, who is an advocate of "family values," marshaled significant political support and resources in unseating Rio Rancho's popular incumbent mayor, Jim Owen. ... Jackson, who is executive director of the New Mexico Family Council, said he plans to return his annual mayoral salary of \$12,192 to the city coffers.

It's admirable. He also insists he will be able to keep his two jobs distinct, telling The Tribune's Megan Arredondo ("Rio leader says he can detach advocacy," March 9) that he is 'not a stranger to wearing two hats.' That's good, because it would be a mistake to assume his narrow election represents a mandate to impose his personal values - no matter how certain he may be about them - on all citizens of Rio Rancho. ... This is not an idle concern, because it is a mistake that Jackson's wife, Kathy Jackson, made as a Rio Rancho school board member in sponsoring a board policy that allows Rio Rancho schools to incorporate discussion of "alternative" theories to biological evolution - such as the religious-based idea of 'intelligent design.' As The Tribune pointed out in an editorial at that time, 'intelligent design' is not science, but belief - religion masquerading as science. The board's action was an assault on science education and science teachers. It undermined the city's children - who are entitled to sound science education - as well as the city's reputation of strongly supporting science, engineering and technology in schools and commerce. Neither the Jacksons, nor the city or school district they serve, can pick and chose among scientific theories they wish to endorse. The same, broad scientific principles that make Intel microchip processing a lucrative industry for Rio Rancho are fundamental to science instruction in city schools. Not surprisingly, Kevin Jackson's election drew interest and comment from New Mexicans for Science and Reason, whose president, Dave Thomas, said this husband-and-wife political duo bears watching. ..."

Source: http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/op_editorials/article/0,2565,ALBQ_19867_4543545,00.html

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March 7th, 2006: Kevin Jackson elected Mayor of Rio Rancho. The Albuquerque Tribune reported on March 10th that "The new mayor-elect of Rio Rancho says he'll have no problem separating his role as a public servant from the "family values" advocacy group he founded and runs. Two local political analysts say it remains to be seen how Kevin Jackson will draw the line. 'I'm not a stranger to wearing different hats,' Jackson said Wednesday, the day after his victory over incumbent Jim Owen and City Councilor Michael Williams. ... Dave Thomas, president of New Mexicans for Science and Reason, said he'll keep an eye on Jackson and his wife, Kathy Jackson, a Rio Rancho School Board member. Last year, the board made headlines when Kathy Jackson and two others voted to allow the discussion of alternative ideas - such as intelligent design - during the teaching of evolution. Kevin Jackson said he was never involved in that debate. During his campaign, Jackson said he wants to bring more high-tech jobs to the city. Thomas said it may be difficult to attract scientists who could fill those jobs if the city promotes intelligent design, a belief favored by many Christian groups who say Charles Darwin's theory of evolution can't explain the origins and complexities of life. 'It seems to be a weird position for Jackson to be in,' Thomas said. ..."

Source: http://www.abqtrib.com/albq/nw_local/article/0,2564,ALBQ_19858_4527556,00.html

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Fordham Foundation releases Report on The State of State Science Standards. [Dave Thomas reports on The Panda's Thumb on Dec. 7th](#) that "It's near the end of the fall term, and Report Cards are in! The Fordham Foundation report on America's science standards, 'The State of State Science Standards 2005,' has been released. ... There are some key points emerging from this report. For one, this year's dumbing-down of Kansas standards got the Fordham folks mad - **really mad**. 'Note

added In Proof: The early warnings have been justified. Kansas has adopted standards whose treatment of evolutionary material has been radically compromised. The effect transcends evolution, however. It now makes a mockery of the very definition of science. The grade for Kansas is accordingly reduced to F.' Additionally, the report directly contradicts the claims of the Discovery Institute's incessant revisionists. ..."

Fordham Report Comments on Creationism disguised as "Critical Thinking"...

In the Fordham report, the authors make a comment that bears **directly** on the current Rio Rancho situation. They note that "Criterion E1, the first of the two concerned with seriousness about science education, denies credit points to any standards that include, inter alia, 'creationist anti-evolutionism disguised as critical thinking.' The inclusion of such anti-evolution content is a goal of contemporary 'intelligent design' creationism, now overtaking other, older forms of creationism in the perennial struggle to discredit 'Darwinism.' A decade ago, this movement, which acquired a command post and funding source in the Discovery Institute of Seattle, Washington, argued vigorously for explicit teaching of the evidence for intelligent design—for the role of external, conscious agency in the history of life on Earth. When examined by qualified scientists and mathematicians, however, that evidence turned out not to be evidence, and so it remains— **no evidence** — at the time of writing. The promoters of intelligent design creationism have perforce retreated to arguments that invoke the popular and conveniently vague educationist formula, 'critical thinking.' The claim now is that evidence against 'Darwinism' exists, that curriculum-makers should include it as an exercise in critical thinking, and that 'freedom of speech' or 'fairness' requires that they do so. The hidden agenda is to introduce doubt—any possible doubt—about evolution at the critical early stage of introduction to the relevant science. ..."

Source: [http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/Science%20Standards.Final%20\(12-6\).pdf](http://www.edexcellence.net/doc/Science%20Standards.Final%20(12-6).pdf) (see pages 14, 15)

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Letter to Albuquerque Journal Westside: "[Evolution Has Become Religion](#)" (subscription) by Derrick Wood of Rio Rancho (Oct. 26th, 2005) - *this shows that Policy 401 is seen by the public as supportive of "Design," despite disclaimers from the board and superintendent.*

"A BIG CHEER for the Rio Rancho school board in passing the ID (Intelligent Design) policy. Evolution has stifled other ideas, thoughts and discoveries, being taught in our public schools for too long. It's the Evolutionist Worldview that's not seeing the forest through the trees. Is there a plan or purpose for life? Everything that the evolutionist "scientist" sees is backed by their bias, or Worldview of evolution. The problem is we are materialistic because we have to see and feel it, but what about information? Just as there is information in a computer program, radio signals, or newspaper, there is intelligent information in the DNA code; is that by accident? Information has no mass, yet it's in every living thing that has mass; so where did it come from? The evolutionists accuse that the teaching of Intelligent Design is teaching religion. I say that evolution is the teaching of the science/naturalism/humanism God. Read the books called 'Darwin's Black Box,' or 'Darwin on Trial'

and read about "bacterial flagellum," then ask yourself if there more to this life then just living and dying. Think about it! You don't want to be wrong in the end."

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Albuquerque Journal Op-ed (Business Section): "[Why Intelligent Design Is Wrong in Science Class](#)" (subscription) by Winthrop Quigley (Oct. 27th, 2005)

"...The reason ID should be taught in science class, according to George W. Bush, is that people should hear both sides of a controversy. Except there is no scientific controversy, because ID does not satisfy a definition of science. The proposition cannot be tested. It cannot be verified. It is about the supernatural, so it can't be reduced to a scientific hypothesis. It is useless as a tool to reveal the workings of nature because all it does is define any problem away: We can't explain why some feature of an insect exists, so it must be that the designer wanted it that way for reasons that are beyond our knowing. The controversy is political and societal, not scientific. So if one wanted to put an ID component into a theology, philosophy or, perhaps, political science curriculum, a case could be made. But science? Forget it. ..."

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Rio Rancho Observer Report: "[RRPS science policy grabs ACLU attention](#)" by Gary Herron (Oct. 27th, 2005)

"The state ACLU sent an e-mail to about 80 science teachers at the high school, Mid-High and middle schools this month telling them not to be afraid to refuse to discuss or teach intelligent design. Teachers who are disciplined for declining to discuss or teach intelligent design should contact the ACLU. ... RRPS Superintendent Dr. Sue Cleveland said she found the ACLU's letter to be deceptive. ... 'I think the ACLU letter was very misleading because it indicated that we were teaching Intelligent Design and directing our staff to do that,' she said. 'That's the opposite of what we've told the staff, that we will not be teaching it and they are not to do that, nor are we asking teachers to teach it or lead discussions about it. So I thought the letter they wrote was very misleading.' ..."

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Albuquerque Journal Report: "[ACLU to Back Faculty Who Stick to Evolution](#)" (subscription) by Elaine D. Briseño (Oct. 20th, 2005)

"Rio Rancho teachers should not be afraid to say 'no' to teaching intelligent design in their science classes. That's the message in an American Civil Liberties Union e-mail sent to 80 middle, mid-high and high school science teachers this week. The organization also offered to assist any teacher disciplined because of the matter. The letters also were sent to the five members of the Rio Rancho Public Schools Board of Education, ACLU executive director Peter Simonson said. ... Some Rio Rancho students are being prompted to provoke discussion leading to intelligent design, according to the ACLU letter. Simonson said that during an event Friday at Destiny Center church in Rio Rancho, students were encouraged to question evolution. Schlichte was at the Friday meeting, leading the closing prayer, he said. The ACLU letter encourages teachers to respond to those students 'with a brief comment on why intelligent design is not science— and therefore not appropriate material for the

science classroom— and then direct the class to legitimate science curriculum.' ..."

**Albuquerque Journal Report: "[Rio Rancho School Evolution Policy Challenged](#)"
(subscription) by Elaine D. Briseño (Oct. 15th, 2005)**

The Rio Rancho school employees union wants the school district to shelve its new science policy relating to evolution until it consults teachers about how it will affect them in the classroom. Failing to do so violates state law, says union attorney Andrew Lotrich, who has filed a complaint with the Rio Rancho Labor Relations Board. The 1,200-member Rio Rancho School Employees' Union wants the labor board to remove the policy from the books until it is brought to the table as part of ongoing contract negotiations. The board hears disputes between management and the union. ... The union represents most of the school district's employees, including teachers and counselors. The district contends the complaint is an attempt to undermine the decision-making authority of the school board and should be dismissed. ... The union claims in its complaint, filed in August, that the school board should have addressed the impact the policy would have on teachers before adopting the policy. Lotrich cited the state collective bargaining law that says: "The scope of bargaining for representatives of public schools as well as education employees in state agencies shall include, as a mandatory subject of bargaining, the impact of professional decisions made by the employer." "The union is not looking to take away the decision-making ability of the district," he said. "All we are asking is the education employees be involved in the process." Shortly after the policy was adopted, there were class disruptions and employee morale dropped, Rio Rancho High School Sci-Matics academy head Dan Barbour has said. ...

Rio Rancho Policy makes the National News: "['Intelligent Design' Trial Under Scrutiny](#)" by Martha Raffaele (Oct. 8th, 2005)

As a federal judge hears arguments over whether a Pennsylvania school district can include "intelligent design" in its biology curriculum, Dan Barbour fears the New Mexico high school where he works could face a similar showdown. The school board in Rio Rancho, N.M., voted in August to allow the discussion of alternative theories to evolution in high school science class. Critics say that could mean intelligent design, and some faculty are averse to teaching a concept whose scientific validity has been questioned, said Barbour, the school's science and math director. "The thing that makes me nervous is that in the classroom a teacher is to be unbiased, but students are allowed to express their opinions. Can a teacher remain unbiased? Can we keep it from becoming a preaching session?" he said. Science educators around the nation are closely monitoring the trial, which involves eight Pennsylvania families who have sued to have intelligent design removed from the Dover Area School District's biology curriculum. They allege that it is essentially a religious concept akin to creationism, and teaching it violates the constitutional separation of church and state. ...

[This AP/USA Today Version shows Prof. Steve Steve!](#)

Op-Ed in the Albuquerque Journal (West Side): "[Design Policy Potentially Damaging to Technology Field](#)" by (former state senator) Pauline Eisenstadt and (former state board of education member) Marshall Berman (Oct. 1st, 2005) ([link for subscribers only](#))

"The Rio Rancho school board has passed a misguided and flawed science policy. ... On the day after the policy was passed, a student brought a Bible into a chemistry class and wanted to discuss intelligent design. On the same day, in a different class on anatomy and physiology, a student questioned the teacher and said that brain-neuron-muscle connections were so complex that they had to be intelligently designed. Another student argued that this system evolved. The two students continued to take up class time on other topics that the teacher tried to present. Later in the week, another student brought the Book of Mormon to class and wanted to discuss it. So far, almost all the Rio Rancho science teachers, and every science organization in the state, have stated their opposition to the policy. All the chairs of the University of New Mexico departments of biology, chemistry, Earth and planetary sciences, physics and astronomy, anthropology, and mathematics and statistics, declared that this policy should be abolished. ... Despite the legalistic crafting of the policy, it appears to promote teaching the unscientific notion of 'intelligent design.' If the board believes that New Mexico's science standards are good, it should avoid tinkering with them. The use of the phrase 'reasonable people' opens the door to introducing nonscientific material, confusing our students and demoralizing our teachers. We think that this policy will also have a negative impact on other technology companies with high-paying jobs that might locate in Rio Rancho or anywhere else in the state. Rio Rancho High School is in one of the most academically successful school districts in the country. It has close ties between its science students and the technology industry, especially Intel, which provided \$30 million for a new high school about 10 years ago. This school board policy will have profoundly negative impacts on student learning in science and critical thinking; it has already significantly lowered teacher morale. ..."

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From the Panda's Thumb: "[Rio Rancho Board: No plans to revisit Science Policy](#)" by Dave Thomas (Sept. 23rd, 2005)

"... on the preceding Sunday, the Flying Spaghetti Monster made a glorious appearance on the Observer's Editorial Page. ... FSM's appearance in the Observer was part of a larger cartoon I did, available in its entirety [here](#) (430 K). "

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Board has no plans to revisit Science Policy (Sept. 22, 2005, by Gary Herron of the Rio Rancho Observer)

"Although Science Policy 401 recently passed by the Rio Rancho Public Schools Board of Education wasn't on the agenda Monday, it didn't stop five residents from using their allotted three minutes in the public comment session to address it. Board president Lisa Cour cautioned those who had signed up to speak before the board started on its agenda items by saying, there are 'no current plans to revisit that decision.' The board voted 3-2 to approve the controversial policy at its Aug. 22 meeting. ... 'Intelligent

Design is not being taught,' clarified Superintendent Dr. Sue Cleveland, although 'students may bring those issues up.' Three of the five people speaking Monday evening opposed the policy while two people, including one man who termed the board 'brave and courageous in undertaking this policy' referred to several Biblical passages during his three minutes. Dave Thomas, the president-elect of the New Mexico Academy of Sciences, told the board, 'The science establishment of New Mexico ~~and~~ [has] reacted to and responded to (Policy 401). Science classrooms are no place to debate the finer points of religion,' said Thomas, who said he has a grand-niece attending school in Rio Rancho, 'Please rescind this policy.' ..."

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From the Panda's Thumb: "Steve Steve arrives in New Mexico" by Prof. Steve Steve (U. of Ediacara) (Sept. 21st, 2005)

"... Here is a photo showing Jesse Johnson and me trying to talk some sense into school board member Don Schlichte, who is a pastor at a local church at his day job. I recognized him immediately, having brushed up on [local creationists](#) prior to my visit. "

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Albuquerque Tribune Editorial: Religion, Science Don't Mix (Sept. 15, 2005, by Dr. Marshall Berman)

"... Schlichte insults those who disagree with him, calling them 'fearmongers,' opponents of 'critical thinking,' intolerant, and opposed to free speech and freedom of religion. But opponents of the policy are none of these. They strongly favor scientific debate, but not fifth-column attempts to introduce unscientific concepts into science classrooms. Does Schlichte's concept of academic freedom and open debate also include teaching astrology, holocaust denial, racism, slavery, Jihad or similar concepts in order to present both sides of issues? ..."

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An Editorial in Crosswinds Weekly: "Where we come from," by Steve Lawrence (Sept. 7th-14th, 2005)

"... In Rio Rancho the other night, no science teacher spoke for Policy 401. When it passed, one of those teachers reportedly shouted, 'Welcome to the Stone Age.' From Rio Rancho to Capitol Hill, we are falling into ignorance. A little intelligent design would go a long way on this country's school boards and in the Oval Office.. ..."

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An Editorial in The Albuquerque Tribune: "[Scientists, public must protest board's policy](#)" (Sept. 13th, 2005)

"Shame on the Rio Rancho Board of Education, specifically board members Don Schlichte, Kathy Jackson and Marty Scharfglass. ... The Rio Rancho Board of Education should be about the business of educating, not preaching to, its students. It is obligated to revisit the issue immediately and right this wrong. ..."

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"Speculation About Design Falls Short of Science" by McAllister Hull (Sept. 12th, 2005)

"The op-ed piece by Rebecca Keller in Saturday's Journal is based entirely on serious misconceptions about science. There are at least two misconceptions: * It is appropriate to have uninformed opinions about scientific propositions, including scientific theories. * Any idea without objective proof is a theory, and is "scientific" if its proposers dress it in jargon...."

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NM Tech Professors' Statement Against Policy 401 (Sept. 9, 2005)

"The members of the faculty senate of New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (in Socorro) strongly disapprove of the newly passed policy by the Rio Rancho school board. In particular, the statement that 'discussions about issues that are of interest to both science and individual religious and philosophical beliefs will acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about the meaning and interpretation of data' implies that religious and philosophical beliefs are an appropriate basis for challenging the validity of a scientific theory. ... "

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From the Panda's Thumb: "More Reaction to Rio Rancho "Science" Policy" by Dave Thomas (Sept. 9th, 2005)

"Today, the Faculty Senate of the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology issued a statement strongly condemning Rio Rancho's new "science" policy, which has been discussed previously on the Thumb here and here. Also, an excellent letter opposing the policy appeared in the Rio Rancho Observer."

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Science Classes Should Educate, Not Indoctrinate by Rebecca Keller (Sept. 3rd, 2005)

"Evolution as a secular creation story is already being preached from the classroom pulpit. Teaching the controversy helps keep religion, of any flavor, out of the classroom ..."

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From the Panda's Thumb: "Rio Rancho NM UPDATE - FSM, Profs Weigh In" by Dave Thomas (Sept. 2nd, 2005)

"...on Thursday, the [Flying Spaghetti Monster](#) has again reached his noodly appendage beyond the internet, into Mainstream Media, or at least to the twice-weekly pages of the Rio Rancho Observer."

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Albuquerque Tribune Editorial: Pseudoscience; Backers of intelligent design have cluttered the Rio Rancho curriculum (Sept. 2, 2005, by Dave Thomas)

"Once Pandora's box is opened, there won't be enough time for real science. There isn't time to really explain all this junk in class. Supporters of intelligent design count on that, knowing that the take-home message will be: *"Evolution has holes, so a miracle must have occurred."*

The Rio Rancho policy is already causing problems. The day after the policy was passed, Bibles and intelligent design were brandished in chemistry and anatomy/physiology classes at Rio Rancho High School, disrupting them. Additional incidents have been reported."

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UNM Professors' Statement Against Policy 401 (Sept. 1, 2005)

"In its inaccurate representation of science, and allowance for other non-scientific concepts to be introduced into the science classroom, the Rio Rancho School District Science Education Policy 401 is detrimental to the entire State of New Mexico. It should be abolished."

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The Los Alamos Monitor Editorial, "Intelligent design" (Aug. 29, 2005)

"Discussion of alternative theories to evolution, such as intelligent design, belongs in social studies or philosophy classes or churches - not science classes."

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From the Panda's Thumb: "Rio Rancho, NM School Board 'Creates' Standards Controversy" by Dave Thomas (Aug. 26, 2005)

"The prime movers behind the policy are RRPS Board members Don Schlichte and Martin Scharfglass. As it turns out, Schlichte is a Senior Pastor, and Scharfglass is a Pastor/Elder at Rio West Community Church in Rio Rancho."

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New Mexico Academy of Science urges RRPS to Abolish Rio Rancho's Science Policy 401 (Aug. 25, 2005)

NMAS Conclusion: *"If scientists simply agreed to disagree about "the meaning and interpretation of data," scientific progress would cease. Science is about testing ideas and claims, not pretending that all 'interpretations' are equally valid."*

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Text of Original Rio Rancho Science Education Policy 401 (Aug. 22, 2005)

August 22, 2005

Science Education Policy 401

The Rio Rancho Board of Education recognizes that scientific theories, such as theories regarding biological and cosmological origins, may be used to support or to challenge individual religious and philosophical beliefs. Consequently, the teaching of science in public school science classrooms may be of great interest and concern to students and their parents.

The Board also acknowledges the conditional trust parents place in public education, as well as the requirements of the Constitution and New Mexico education law, that the classroom not be used to indoctrinate students into any religious or philosophical belief system.

Because of these concerns, this policy recognizes that the Rio Rancho Public Schools should teach an objective science education, without religious or philosophical bias, that upholds the highest standards of empirical science.

Therefore, science teachers in Rio Rancho Public Schools will align their instruction with the District's approved curricula and fully comply with the requirements of the New Mexico 2003 revised Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards. Age-appropriate emphasis will be given to Strand I, Science Thinking and Practice; Strand II, The Content of Science; and Strand III, Science and Society.

When appropriate and consistent with the New Mexico Science Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Performance Standards, discussions about issues that are of interest to both science and individual religious and philosophical beliefs will acknowledge that reasonable people may disagree about the meaning and interpretation of data.

Rio Rancho Public Schools Adopted: August 22, 2005

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Rio Rancho School Board Members

Contact Info

Voting FOR Policy 401: (Aug. 22nd, 2005)

District 1

Don J. Schlichte, Member

Elected: March 12, 2001

Re-elected: Feb. 14, 2005

Term Expires: 2009

RWCCATintegrity.com (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)

District 2

Marty Scharfglass, Member

Elected: February 4, 2003

Term Expires: 2007

marlowe9114ATmsn.com (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)

District 4
Kathy Jackson,
Vice President
Elected: February 4, 2003
Term Expires: 2007
kathyjacksonrrnmATmsn.com (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)
Voting AGAINST Policy 401: (Aug. 22nd, 2005)

District 3
Margaret M. Terry,
Secretary
Elected: March 12, 2001
Re-elected: Feb. 14, 2005
Term Expires: 2009
Gonzales-TerryATearthlink.net (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)

District 5
Lisa Cour, President
Elected: February 4, 1997
Re-elected: March 12, 2001
Re-elected: Feb. 14, 2005
Term Expires: 2009
kycomomATaol.com (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)
Superintendent, Rio Rancho Public Schools

Dr. Sue Cleveland
edreherATrrdo.rrps.k12.nm.us (fight SPAM, replace AT with @)