

Jamie Gonzales
Policy Division, New Mexico Public Education Department
Room 101, 300 Don Gaspar Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
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Regarding: 6.29.10 NMAC - New Mexico STEM-Ready Science Standards

Dear Public Education Department Officials:

We, the undersigned, are scientists and engineers concerned about New Mexico science education.

We strongly disagree with the proposed "New Mexico STEM-Ready Science Standards." These proposed standards fall far short of what is needed to foster scientifically literate students, compared to both the existing New Mexico science standards and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that are being adopted in many other states. In particular, we note that

- by changing occurrences of "global warming" in NGSS to "temperature fluctuations" in the proposed standards, and by many instances of sidelining climate change in some of the extra standards (tagged 'NM') that your department has added to NGSS, the proposed standards suggest denial of the reality of one of the central scientific and engineering challenges of our time: human-caused climate change,
- by striking the 4.6 billion year age of the Earth and the long co-evolution of planetary geology and the biosphere from the NGSS standards, the proposed standards eliminate important subjects, and might even be construed to allow teaching an alternative, non-scientific "young Earth" approach to Earth science and biology in science classes, and
- by eliminating some of the discussion of evolution from the NGSS, the proposed standards seem to suggest that there may be an alternative scientific explanation for the history of life on Earth and its current diversity, while in fact evolution is the only such scientific explanation, and is critical to progress in biomedical research.

Understanding the human causes of climate change, biological common ancestry and natural selection, and Earth's slow transformations are all essential to modern scientific literacy. There is absolutely no scientific rationale for weakening the treatment of these subjects in New Mexico K-12 education. Weak treatment of these subjects would be a disservice to our students and, ultimately, a blow to our state's economic competitiveness, adversely impacting the economy directly through diminished skills of the workforce, and indirectly through a tarnished state reputation that would discourage high-tech firms from locating here.

Sincerely,
Signatories below

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Dr. Robert Benjamin | Los Alamos National Laboratory Fellow; Playwright; Children's science book author.

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