

## FAQ:

# Does ID want to Sneak Creationism through the "Back Door" (into science and schools)?

**The Short Answer:** Of course our answer to this question is "no." ID proponents are very clear about what they want: (1) for legitimate scientific critiques of evolution to be taught and (2) for teachers to be free to teach the evidence supporting intelligent design, if they want to do so. This is the sort of question where no matter how you answer it, some people will never be convinced. That's because this is the sort of issue where its proof is hidden--it has to do with covert motives which are often unseen--not with what people actually say or do. Intelligent design theory cannot make reference to the supernatural, and thus it does not advocate teaching religion or creationism in the classroom.

### The Long Answer:

ID proponents are very clear about what they want to do. Consider these quotes from ID proponents about how to teach origins science:

"Teach Darwin's elegant theory. But also discuss where it has real problems accounting for the data, where data are severely limited, where scientists might be engaged in wishful thinking and where alternative even "heretical" explanations are possible."  
(Michael Behe, "Teach Evolution and Ask Hard Questions;"New York Times, August 13, 1999, Friday, Page A21, Editorial Desk)

"What educators in Kansas and elsewhere should be doing is to "teach the controversy." Of course students should learn the orthodox Darwinian theory and the evidence that supports it, but they should also learn why so many are skeptical, and they should hear the skeptical arguments in their strongest form rather than in a caricature intended to make them look as silly as possible." (Phillip Johnson, The Wedge of Truth, pg. 82)

Discovery Institute fellow Stephen Meyer, while advocating on behalf of "teaching the controversy" in Ohio wrote the following about the policy he advocates:

(1) First, I suggested--speaking as an advocate of the theory of intelligent design--that Ohio not require students to know the scientific evidence and arguments for the theory of intelligent design, at least not yet.

(2) Instead, I proposed that Ohio teachers teach the scientific controversy about Darwinian evolution. Teachers should teach students about the main scientific arguments for and against Darwinian theory. And Ohio should test students for their understanding of those arguments, not for their assent to a point of view.

(3) Finally, I argued that the state board should permit, but not require, teachers to tell students about the arguments of scientists, like Lehigh University biochemist Michael Behe, who advocate the competing theory of intelligent design.

(Stephen C. Meyer in Teach the Controversy (Cincinnati Enquirer, March 30, 2002, at "<http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?program=CSC&command=view&id=1134>")

Senior Program Director at Discovery's Center for Science and Culture, Jay Richards, advocates a similar policy:

"We never said that we think that intelligent design out to be literally mandated. ... We think that teachers should be free, if they want, to discuss these issues." (As Quoted in Intelligent Design Debate becomes personal in Resaerch news and Opportunities in Science and Theology, Dec 2002)

Creationism is saying something very different from intelligent design. Creationism posits that a supernatural being created life. This is the very reason why the Supreme Court declared creationism to be religion in *Edwards. v. Aguillard*. Intelligent design theory makes no appeals to the supernatural nor can it tell the identity of the designer. Thus, teaching intelligent design theory cannot entail teaching creationism, or religion. ID proponents do not desire to bring religion into the classroom. In fact, ID proponents strongly supported the "Santorum Amendment," a resolution passed by the United States Senate while debating the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:

"It is the sense of the Senate that

"(1) good science education should prepare students to distinguish the data or testable theories of science from philosophical or religious claims that are made in the name of science;

(2) where biological evolution is taught, the curriculum should help students to understand why this subject generates so much continuing controversy, and should prepare the students to be informed participants in public discussions regarding the subject."

This amendment explicitly desires to help students to understand what is, and what is not science in the science classroom and to "distinguish" between scientific claims and religions claims. Thus, ID proponent Phillip Johnson writes regarding the Santorum Amendment:

"When citizens tell me that they want to present a proposal to administrators or school boards asking for more unbiased teaching of evolution, I advise them to use the precise language of the Santorum amendment and not add anything to it. " (Phillip Johnson, "Intelligent Design, Freedom, and Education" at <http://www.arn.org/docs2/news/designfreedomeducation050903.htm>)

This is exactly the policy the U.S. Supreme Court wants to see implemented In the case *Edwards. v. Aguillard*, the Supreme Court majority provided a framework under which a legislature might pass an acceptable bill regarding the teaching of science:

"If the Louisiana Legislature's purpose was solely to maximize the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of science instruction, it would have encouraged the teaching of all scientific theories about the origins of humankind.' (Edwards at 588).

Furthermore, the Court stated that it was not unconstitutional for a legislature to pass a bill which "require[d] that scientific critiques of prevailing scientific theories be taught," because "teaching a variety of scientific theories about the origins of humankind to schoolchildren might be validly done with the clear secular intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction." (Edwards at 593 - 594). Thus, if the purpose is to increase the "comprehensiveness" and "effectiveness" of science education, and they are teaching bona fide scientific theories and evidence, then such an act would be constitutional. This is good policy, and this is intelligent design proponents desire as well. Thus, ID proponents are not trying to bring creationism into the classroom, and there is nothing covert about

their motives. They merely want (1) legitimate scientific critiques of evolution to be taught and (2) at this point, evidence supporting intelligent design theory to be taught, if teachers want to.

### **Does this answer the question?**

Of course, making this defense is unlikely to convince the skeptic who thinks that ID has false motives. This is the sort of question where no matter how you answer it, some people will never be convinced. That's because this is the sort of issue where its proof is hidden--it has to do with covert motives which are often unseen--not with what people actually say or do. Yet the truth remains that intelligent design theory is different from creationism in the key aspect that ID makes no reliance upon the supernatural or religious texts. The problems with teaching creationism (it appeals to the supernatural and relies upon religious texts or divine authority) are not found in intelligent design theory. Intelligent design is a bona fide scientific theory which seeks to merely detect the tell-tale signs that life was designed. If it was taught, it could not bring religion into the science classroom (while creationism would).

The presence of pure ID research groups (ISCID.org) which are supported (at least in spirit) by groups like the Discovery Institute should be evidence that ID proponents are interested in only promoting intelligent design, and not some covert brand of creationism.

In fact, Program Associate Director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute, John West, notes five essential points regarding differences between creationism and intelligent design:

1. "Intelligent Design Creationism" is a pejorative term coined by some Darwinists to attack intelligent design; it is not a neutral label of the intelligent design movement.
2. Unlike creationism, intelligent design is based on science, not sacred texts.
3. Creationists know that intelligent design theory is not creationism.
4. Like Darwinism, design theory may have implications for religion, but these implications are distinct from its scientific program.
5. Fair-minded critics recognize the difference between intelligent design and creationism.

(Intelligent Design and Creationism Just Aren't the Same by John G. West in Research News and Opportunities in Science and Theology; December 1, 2002)

It is clear that no promoters of intelligent design are trying to sneak religion or creationism into the science classroom.