

# Returning to pro-evolution standards could take months

By JOHN HANNA  
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — While Kansas public schools are likely to get their fifth set of science standards in eight years, the officials who want to ditch the anti-evolution ones now in place aren't planning to act immediately.

Two new State Board of Education members take office Jan. 8, ending a conservative GOP majority and giving control to a coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans. That makes a return to standards treating evolution as well-grounded science — not a flawed theory — seem inevitable.

But board members and scientists who want to rewrite the standards also want to take at least several months to do it. They hope to reconvene a panel of educators whose evolution-friendly work fell by the wayside last year when the board's conservative majority decided to adopt language suggested by intelligent design supporters.

Those wanting to rewrite the standards argue that schools either resisted the anti-evolution ones or decided to hold off on any course changes until after this year's elections, given the chance that they would change the board's membership.

"There's no real, compelling reason that they have to be adopted in January," said Steve Case, associate director of the University of Kansas' Center for Science Education. "I don't want the board to do anything in haste in a reactionary sort of way. They need to do it right."

Intelligent design supporters don't believe the board can do a good job of rewriting the standards. They contend the existing ones don't promote their ideas but encourage an open classroom discussion of evolution and its flaws.

"We're fighting entrenched authority, not only within the science institutions, but within the academic institutions," said John Calvert, a retired Lake Quivira attorney who helped found the Intelligent Design Network.

## Reviewing the debate

**NEW STANDARDS:** The State Board of Education is expected to rewrite the state's science standards next year because its majority has changed.  
**THE CHANGE:** Current standards, adopted last year, treat evolution as a flawed theory. New standards are likely to be evolution-friendly.  
**NOT IMMEDIATE:** Board members and educators who want to rewrite the standards also want to take several months to do it, to give a writing committee a chance to review a proposal that has been floated since March.

torney who helped found the Intelligent Design Network.

Joining the board in January are moderate Republicans Sally Cauble, of Liberal, and Jana Shaver of Independence. While campaigning, Cauble said evolution had been well-tested. Shaver said last week that the board should rely on scientists and educators to write the standards — an approach likely to lead to evolution-friendly standards.

Such standards are used to develop tests for students, to measure

how well schools are teaching science. While they don't dictate what schools teach — those decisions are left to 296 local school boards — scientists worry that any tilt toward intelligent design would encourage changes in the classroom.

Intelligent design says an intelligent cause is the best way to explain some features of the universe that are complex and well-ordered. Many scientists view it as creationism, repackaged to get around a 1987 U.S. Supreme Court ruling

that prohibited its teaching as a government endorsement of specific religious doctrines.

Kansas had evolution-friendly standards in 1999, when a conservative state board majority rewrote them to delete most references to the theory. That inspired international ridicule — and a voter backlash. The board returned to evolution-friendly standards in February 2001, just a month after a moderate majority took over.

State law requires periodic reviews of academic standards, leading the board to consider changes last year, with a conservative majority back in charge.

Those changes included a definition of science that doesn't specifically limit science to the search for natural explanations of phenomena.

Also, the new standards said evolutionary theory that all life had a common origin has been challenged by fossils and molecular biology. And, they said, there's controversy over whether changes over time in one species can lead to a new

species. Both statements echo intelligent design arguments, defying mainstream science.

"The sooner the teachers in Kansas get a clear directive of what is expected of them, the better it will be for science education," said Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education in Oakland, Calif., which fights efforts to undermine the teaching of evolution. "Hopefully, this will not be a really drawn-out process and it won't get derailed."

But John West, a senior fellow at the Seattle-based Discovery Institute, which supports intelligent design research, contends that if the new board is serious about writing good standards, it will have hearings and ensure that people with diverse views, including evolution critics, have a role.

If the board simply wants to "rubber stamp" the scientific establishment's views, he said, "I don't know why they're going to even go through motions. They might as well just approve it."

# Newton bicyclist hits 200,000 miles for troubled, disabled children

NEWTON (AP) — When he was born, doctors predicted a lifetime of disability for Jerry Smith.

But Smith, now 67, has traveled coast to coast three times, and ridden the roller-coaster roads of the Canadian Rockies from Montana into Alaska. Last fall, he traveled the Lewis and Clark Trail.

He's done it all by bicycle. "Years ago I told Shirley (his wife) I'd already spent too much of my life looking out the window watching the world go by, and that I'd never do that again," said Smith, whose soft, slow drawl hints at his Southern boyhood.

He's speaking of his first 15 years, when his world was often the sterile confines of a children's hospital and his only wheels were on the wheelchairs that carried him about.

His older brother, Walter, remembers when he and other family members had to carry Smith around on visits home, even up until he was almost 14.

Smith's life story is a trilogy of the kindness of strangers giving hope and healing, a grown child making the most of his second chance, and his dedication to repaying his debt of gratitude by helping more children.

Smith was born in Savannah, Ga., his feet garishly twisted so far inward that doctors gave him no chance of walking.

He was 9 months old when he was admitted to a Shriners children's hospital in South Carolina. He spent most of his childhood there.

"It was hard on Momma when his first stay was about nine months," Walter Smith said. "They didn't want kids to have visitors at those hospitals back then. I think they were afraid the kids would want to go home."

Through the years, Jerry Smith endured eight surgeries and countless hours of physical therapy.

Months often passed between family visits.

Yet all of his memories are good. "They took such unbelievable care of us kids, so much better than most could have gotten anywhere else."

"They really loved us," he said, looking through the few photos he has from that time. "They kept telling me I was going to get better, and I never had any reason to doubt them."

The man who jokingly refers to himself as "the only man in Kansas without an accent" drew a procession of memories during a recent interview. He spoke of Christmas

trees and presents, Easter baskets and games of jacks. By stretcher or wheelchair, he went to class taught by Miss Alice. His best friend was Jesse White, a burn victim who had more than 70 surgeries and 120 blood transfusions.

In the hospital and out, he did his best to live the life of a normal boy.

Walter Smith remembers helping Jerry as they played, carrying him around or finding a long, slender stick so he could scratch itches within his casts. He said his brother wasn't above a bit of orneriness.

"He could be a knucklehead at times," Walter Smith said. "I remember Momma would get mad at

him, and he'd crawl under the house. She'd worry about him not having lunch, and she'd give in."

Smith was released from the Shriners hospital shortly before his 15th birthday, having slowly improved from lumbering in heavy braces to walking with crutches to eventually walking unaided.

He hit the rest of his life running. He joined the Navy at 17 in 1956.

An assignment as a fireman at an auxiliary naval air strip in Newton brought him to Kansas, where he met Shirley. They married in 1958.

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