



Ivory Tower University

Department of Natural Sciences

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From: Department Chairman
To: All Staff
Re: **Educators guide to dealing with
“intelligent design”**

The troublesome issue of intelligent design (known simply as ID) is one that every science educator needs to be prepared to deal with. The issue threatens our society on several levels. For example, how can our nation hope to compete in an increasingly technological world unless our budding new scientists believe life is a purposeless cosmic accident? The very integrity of science is in danger. In fact, the continued existence of civilization might be at stake. True science must always provide purely naturalistic answers, not simply follow the evidence where it leads. Unless we restrain the range of acceptable answers to scientific problems, we cannot guarantee appropriate, scientific conclusions. Such is our duty as educators. The following suggestions should make your job of shaping young minds somewhat easier.

1. *Be vague about what exactly is meant by the word "evolution".* Use the term in the most expansive way when referring to support for or the importance of the theory ("evolution is supported by a vast amount of evidence" or "nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution"). You can *imply* that any kind of evolution (cosmological, chemical, biological) is strongly supported by the evidence, but when pressed to defend this, drop back to the less significant but well-proven examples like antibiotic resistance. Under no circumstances should you allow any distinction between what your opponents will call *microevolution* (small, observable changes like antibiotic resistance) and *macroevolution* (major changes whose causes and even existence can only be inferred); that way you can imply that the strong support for the former is really support for the latter as well. You should implicitly assume (as you were taught) that many small changes can (and did) lead to new highly complex systems, and allow no questioning of this assertion.

2. Be prepared to reframe the argument. If you should encounter any doubt or criticism of "evolution", immediately reframe the criticism as being a promotion of intelligent design. Then stress that "intelligent design is not science", which was, of course, scientifically proven by Judge Jones in the Dover case. *This has the convenient rhetorical effect of rendering as non-science all possible criticism of our side!* Logically, it works like this:

Any criticism of "evolution" = promotion of ID

But ID = religion

Therefore any criticism = religion!

Try to find occasions to repeat "ID is not science" in class as often as possible; if necessary, practice this several times each day in front of a mirror until you can say it convincingly. Because science has come to mean absolute truth, everything else is at best mere opinion, so it is critical that you *keep ID out of the science category*. But when establishing that ID is not science, try not to use actual science to make your point. The more that facts are discussed, the more obvious it will become that both sides use the same facts, and that the different viewpoints result from philosophical biases rather than good or bad science. If your students at any point realize that ID is based on science as much as "evolution" is, you may have made converts of the most dedicated kind for the other side. The best approach is to immediately relegate ID to the category of religion or philosophy, and never let the issues be discussed.

3. Avoid the tough issues. If despite your best efforts the issues begin to be discussed, do your best to keep the conversation away from dangerous topics like "how did life get started?" and "how did complex features like cellular machinery come about?". Again, it helps to be rather vague about what you mean by "evolution"; when you point out that evolution is well-supported by the evidence, use examples of minor observable changes (bird beaks, etc.) while implying that the major, unobserved changes are also well-supported. In general, try to subtly downplay the complexity of living things. For example, you can imply that the abundance of life on Earth means that the complexity must not be such a big deal. The popular notion that there has to be life on other planets will work in your favor, as will the abundant science fiction your students are no doubt familiar with. For example, the recent discussions of the *possibility* of life on Mars can easily be presented as the *likelihood* of life there, especially if you stick to the headlines rather than the articles themselves. Your student's inexperience with the facts will help. If by chance there should be a more knowledgeable student in your class with the nerve to speak up, imply somehow that the student is either ignorant or superstitious. For example, you might say something like "religious fundamentalism has a place, but not in science class."

4. *Be prepared to misdirect the conversation.* If things get bad and your class begins to question how random events could ever result in really complicated living things, there are at least a couple of effective strategies. One is to mention how all scientists accept evolution. If one of your students should happen to know that 700+ PhD scientists have signed a "dissent from Darwinism" statement, respond that these are only a tiny minority and imply that they are probably religiously motivated. (As an aside, our universities simply *must* begin doing a better job of screening these people out, and look into revoking the degrees of trouble-makers.) Another effective ploy if ID begins to be discussed is to divert the conversation with the trustworthy "Who designed the designer?". You can easily use up half a class period that way, and be prepared next class to direct the conversation more appropriately.

5. *Do not hesitate to mischaracterize ID's motives.* Although ID proponents, unlike creationists, are really quite good about sticking to scientific arguments, it is to your advantage to not distinguish between the two. In fact, we recommend that you always append the term "creationism" to ID so that it reads *intelligent design creationism*. Since we have succeeded in getting the courts to discredit creationism (thank you, ACLU!), this has the effect of (a) immediately attributing religious motives to ID, (b) implying that that ID has no more scientific basis than creationism, and (c) immediately diverting the discussion away from scientific evidence to fears of Taliban-like imposition of religious dogma. Because scientists are objective and open-minded, dogma should be ours to impose and hopefully that will increasingly be the case.

6. *Remember who is on your side; rely on your allies.* You have many resources at your disposal - use them! The National Center for Science Education has the primary goal of making your students believe properly, and they have much that will help you accomplish this. Your state education agency is most likely an ally, unless you are unlucky enough to be in the Bible belt, but we are working hard to bring those agencies into line too. Be aware that Wikipedia has been *very* friendly to our cause, so encourage your students to go there for perspective. You should also tell them to watch public television: PBS has been extremely effective in broadcasting various anti-ID documentaries. You can also turn to the National Academy of Sciences, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Association of Biology Teachers, all leading authorities that have officially spoken on behalf of all scientists and educators by declaring intelligent design to be wrong. Finally, if necessary, you can contact the ACLU; they have been very helpful on a wide range of issues. But always remember - your students don't know the science as well as you do, so despite right-wing interpretations of the U.S. constitution,

parental objections, etc., to the contrary, your students ultimately have no right to believe differently than we scientists do. You didn't become an educator so your students could have their own opinions, so don't let them!