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"After facing an onslaught of opposition, New Mexico's Public Education Department officials on Wednesday decided to adopt the Next Generation Science Standards 'in their entirety,'" the *Albuquerque Journal* (October 25, 2017), [reports](#) [4].

It is the third proposal for a new set of state science standards in New Mexico within the space of two months. As NCSE previously reported, the first proposal was to adopt a set of standards modeled on the performance expectations of the Next Generation Science Standards. But the proposed standards lacked important elements of the NGSS (such as disciplinary core ideas, science and engineering practices, and cross-cutting concepts), included dozens of new, New-Mexico-specific, standards, and — particularly of concern to NCSE — underwent editing by the Public Education Department to weaken their treatment of evolution, climate change, and the age of the earth.

After a month-long public comment period culminating in a public hearing on the standards in Santa Fe on October 16, 2017, it was clear that the proposal was generally unpopular, with scientific, educational, environmental, business, and faith groups across the state expressing their opposition. Referring to the public hearing, the *Albuquerque Journal* (October 18, 2017) editorially [commented](#) [5], "Herbert Van Hecke, a physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, seemed to sum up what nearly everyone in Monday's audience felt: 'Science is based on facts, evidence and hard work. We are not doing kids any favors by allowing scientific flimflam into the classroom.'"

The day after the public hearing, the second proposal appeared. In what the Santa Fe *New Mexican* (October 17, 2017) [described](#) [6] as a "surprise turnaround," the Public Education Department announced that it "will revise its controversial proposal for new science teaching standards, adding concepts that had been omitted, such as evolution, global warming and Earth's age." Four standards were restored to match the NGSS standards on which they were based, and the Public Education Department subsequently indicated that the number of New-Mexico-specific standards would be reduced. But there was still unclarity about the exact contours of the proposal.

The third proposal — to adopt the NGSS "in their entirety" with the addition of only six New-Mexico-specific standards — was launched on October 25, 2017, and was immediately lauded as a significant improvement. Ellen Loehman of the New Mexico Science Teachers' Association told the *Albuquerque Journal*, "We thank the secretary [Christopher Ruskowski] for listening to all the public comments ... We are pleased and looking forward to a good working relationship." It is not yet clear, however, whether the standards will include the whole of the NGSS — and thus the disciplinary core ideas, the science and engineering practices, and the cross-cutting concepts — or just the performance expectations.

The standards were under discussion during the October 26, 2017, meeting of the Legislative Education Study Committee. According to the *Albuquerque Journal* (October 26, 2017), state senator Mimi Stewart (D-District 17), who chairs the committee, "applauded 'the huge outcry from the science and business community' for demanding the state adopt the NGSS standards as written," adding, "You have come out in a way I've never seen before." Amid the congratulations, however, there were complaints about the absence of any Public Education Department staff from the meeting, concerns about the New-Mexico-specific standards, and warnings about the "long and costly process of implementing the standards that will include paying for new instructional materials and teacher training."

NCSE's deputy director Glenn Branch — who [told](#) [7] *Mother Jones* (September 15, 2017) that the divergences from the NGSS in the first proposal for the new state science standards were "evidently intended to placate creationists and climate change deniers" — commended the Public Education Department for its decision to heed the critics of the previous proposals. "New Mexico's students deserve to learn about evolution, climate change, and the age of the earth in a way consistent with the scientific community's understanding of those topics," he commented, "and it's a relief, after all the furor, to be confident that New Mexico's new state science standards will help to ensure that they will."

According to the *Albuquerque Journal*, "[t]he new standards will go into effect July 1, 2018, with full implementation in the 2019-2020 school year," although doubts were expressed at the LESC meeting that the implementation could proceed so quickly.

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