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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ASKS REVIEW BOARD TO REVISE PROPOSED SCIENCE STANDARDS

Standards in three other content areas are adopted

CHEYENNE - The Wyoming State Board of Education adopted new standards in three content areas - social studies, physical education, and career & vocational education - Friday during its meeting in Casper. The Board also voted to send the draft science standards back to the Wyoming Department of Education's (WDE) Science Standards Review Committee for revision.

The State Board of Education began its meeting by adopting proposed standards in the content areas of social studies, physical education, and career & vocational education. The standards adopted by the State Board of Education can be viewed here: <http://edu.wyoming.gov/educators/standards/>.

There are nine content areas in Wyoming, each with its own set of standards: math, English language arts, health, fine and performing arts, foreign language, physical education, social studies, career & vocational education, and science. The State Board of Education reviews recommendations made by the standards review committees in each content area and approves standards in each content area every five years.

After standards are voted for adoption by the State Board of Education and rule promulgation process is set into place, Governor Mead has a 10-day review where he can instruct the agency to proceed with the adoption process, or delay public comment and set meetings with those he feels necessary to garner more information.

After receiving the permission of the Governor to continue with the rule promulgation process, a 45-day public comment period will open. The State Board of Education will then review and prepare statements for the comments of the public. The Governor then has the opportunity to sign the new standards into law after a 75-day review period by his office.

The promulgation process for the three content areas approved by the State Board last Friday won't begin until after the State Board meets again in June.

After adoption of standards in three content areas, the focus of the meeting turned to discussion of a process for adoption of science standards. The Board listened to testimony representing both sides of the NGSS debate from students, educators, and other citizens from across Wyoming.

Micheli thanked those who participated in the standards review process, as well as those who attended Friday's meeting to make their voices heard.

"We hope that you will stay engaged," said Micheli. "I know this board has been criticized for not taking enough public comment. I hope you see today that is not the case. The challenge we have is to get the word out to everyone so they can participate. We can do better. We encourage you to continue to participate."

The debate was not limited to the public as State Board of Education members also made their feelings known during a passionate, but polite debate.

"The Board wants the science standards to be of the highest quality possible," said Board member Scotty Ratliff. "What they are called shouldn't be the relevant thing, it is the content of the standards. I wish there was a motion to keep this thing moving. I think that is why we are all here."

"My charge is to do the best I can for the education of Wyoming students," said State Board Member Pete Gosar. "Those kids who sit in physics, biology, in fourth grade science, count on me to do the right thing for their education... I think the children of Wyoming deserve the best they can in science."

A number of motions dealing with the science standards failed during the meeting.

- A motion to adopt a resolution from the supervisory committee to pause work on the science standards adoption failed by a 3-6 vote;
- A motion to stop further action on the NGSS failed for lack of a second;

- A motion to send the NGSS to Department of Education staff to make revisions to the standards did not pass. While a majority of voting members approved this motion (five of the nine in attendance), Wyoming State Statute 21-2-302 requires a majority of all members of the board (11) to pass a motion, meaning six members would be required to vote in favor of a motion for it to pass;
- A motion to adopt NGSS failed by a 3-6 vote.

The Board then voted to reconsider its motion to send the standards back to the Science Standards Review Committee. That motion passed, leading to debate and finally a motion directing the WDE to revisit its proposed standards.

Dr. Jim Verley heads up the Science Standards Review Team for the WDE and said his group will begin the process of standards revisions as soon as it can.

“I will immediately contact the science standards review committee members and begin plans to reconvene as soon as possible,” he said.

“I don’t think that what we did today will stop good teaching in schools, good science teachers teaching what they know to be best, and the districts having those discussions themselves,” said Board member Kathryn Coon.

“As it turns out, we are going back to the drawing board,” said State Board of Education President Ron Micheli. “We are going back to the department and seeing if we can’t get some standards that are Wyoming standards and standards we all can be proud of.”

The State Board of Education has not yet set a time or location for its next board meeting.

For more information on this meeting or other State Board of Education business, contact Dr. Paige Fenton Hughes at 307.349.4506 or paige.fentonhughes@gmail.com.