



The Debate over Teaching Intelligent Design -- Background:

There is a divisive debate across the nation today concerning the teaching of intelligent design (ID) in public-school science classes alongside the theory of *evolution*, leading some to argue that the Scopes *Monkey Trial* is being relived across America's educational landscape.

Intelligent design proposes that the living world it is too complex and intricate to merely be the product of *natural selection*. Therefore, the mechanisms of the natural world at some point must have been guided by an intelligent force.

The theory is not necessarily the same as *creationism*, though, since some adherents of ID allow for the earth to be billions of years old, whereas creationists generally believe in the Biblical account of the earth's origins, making it only thousands of years old.

Evolutionary theory proposes, however, that life is gradually yet constantly evolving, or changing, due to adaptations, or adjustments, that it makes to its environment. These adaptations are then inherited by the next generation. Modern evolutionary theory was first popularized through the studies and writings of *Charles Darwin*. Some biology and medical researchers use evolution as the basis for their studies.

Critics of teaching intelligent design in high-school science classes contend that it is not hard science, since its premises cannot be proven or demonstrated. They also argue that ID is merely a way to inject the teaching of creationism into public schools.

Yet supporters of ID argue that nature's design *can* be examined and proven, and that evolution is a flawed theory that needs to be challenged by other schools of thought.

ID recently received a vote of confidence when President Bush mentioned that he condones the teaching of other views of how life formed in addition to evolution.

Bush's comments, though, resonated sharply throughout the scientific community, since many have responded that Bush does not have the authority or the educational background to be weighing in on such matters.

Either way, by expressing his opinion, the president has added more significance to an already energized issue.