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The Alabama state board of education voted unanimously to approve a new set of science standards on September 10, 2015, [according](#) [4] to National Public Radio (September 10, 2015) — and evolution is described as "substantiated with much direct and indirect evidence."

Speaking to NPR, NCSE's Minda Berbeco praised the improvement on evolution, saying, "We were really pleased to see that" and lauded the shift to "a really positive, pro-science perspective." (Dan Carlsen's nine-minute interview of Berbeco about the new standards is [available](#) [5] from WBHM radio in Birmingham, Alabama.)

In the past, Alabama's science standards have explicitly sought to deprecate evolution. In the preface to the 1996 version of the standards, for example, evolution was described as "a controversial theory some scientists present," and the board voted to require the insertion of a corresponding disclaimer about evolution in science textbooks in the state's public schools.

Subsequent versions of the standards weakened the disclaimer. The preface to the 2001 version described evolution by natural selection as controversial and expressed skepticism of its ability to produce "large" evolutionary changes, while the preface to the 2005 version retained the skepticism of the power of natural selection but omitted the description of it as controversial.

[According](#) [6] (PDF, p. iv) to the preface to the new version, however, "The theory of evolution has a role

in explaining unity and diversity of life on earth. This theory is substantiated with much direct and indirect evidence. Therefore, this course of study requires our students to understand the principles of the theory of evolution from the perspective of established scientific knowledge."

In the standards themselves, biology students are expected to "[a]nalyze and interpret data to evaluate adaptations resulting from natural and artificial selection" and to "[a]nalyze scientific evidence (e.g., DNA, fossil records, cladograms, biogeography) to support hypotheses of common ancestry and biological evolution" (p. 48).

Curiously, although the Alabama standards adopt three of the NGSS's four core ideas of the life sciences verbatim, where the NGSS refers to "Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity" as a core idea of the life sciences, the Alabama standards refer instead to "Unity and Diversity." (Similarly, Oklahoma's new standards refer instead to "Biological Unity and Diversity.")

There was comparatively little controversy over the new standards, according to NPR, which cited as possible reasons the requirement that public comments concern specific standards as well as the support of the Alabama Science Teachers Association.

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