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## [A last-minute threat to evolution education averted in Ohio](#) [3]



On February 13, 2018, the Ohio state board of education voted to adopt a new set of science standards — although not without the appearance of a last-minute amendment that seems to have been intended to undermine the teaching of evolution.

Evolution is prominent in the new [standards](#) [4] (PDF), including — for the first time — at the middle school level. There was not a significant public controversy over the treatment of evolution during the process, unlike in 2002, as NCSE then [reported](#) [5].

But just before the February 13, 2018, meeting of the board, Sarah Fowler (representing District 7), proposed to amend the high school standards by adding the following "overarching content statement":

Science is a systematic method of continuing investigation, based on observation, measurement, experimentation, analysis, hypothesis testing, and theory building, which attempt[s] to provide more adequate explanations of natural phenomena; however, scientific conclusions are necessarily based upon philosophical assumptions, especially those interpreting the past or future. The nature of science is to continually test and strengthen or rebut/refute existing understandings of natural phenomena.

The aligned assessment must state the philosophical assumptions upon which the expected

answer is based.

The description of science in the first sentence follows a description in the 2002 version of the standards (except that the standards contain "which leads to" where Fowler's amendment contains "which attempt[s] to").

The remainder of the first sentence, however, seems to reflect the idea — prominent in the "intelligent design" movement — that evolution is not scientific but based on philosophical views that are inherently antithetical to theism.

At the [board meeting](#) [6] (video; start at 1:37:00), Fowler expressed concern that the high school standards exhibited a philosophical bias which would disadvantage students from different philosophical backgrounds, especially on state assessment tests.

Although Fowler failed to identify the bias or any specific standards that exemplified it, her colleague Cathye Flory (at large) subsequently asked about how a hypothetical student who doesn't accept "the Darwin theory" would be tested.

Fowler's amendment failed on a 2-14 vote, with Lisa Woods (representing District 5) joining Fowler in voting for it. A resolution to approve the standards as proposed then passed on a 15-1 vote, with Fowler the sole dissenter.

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[4] <ftp://ftp.ode.state.oh.us/StateBoardBooks/February-2018/Voting%20Items/Item%209%20-%20Standards%20-%20Backup%20Material/Science%20K-12%20Standards%20Nov%202017%20Draft.pdf>

[5] <https://ncse.com/news/2002/12/open-letter-to-ohio-citizens-science-00386>

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