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Evolution Opponents Lose Kansas Board Majority

By [RALPH BLUMENTHAL](#)

Kansas voters on Tuesday handed power back to moderates on the State Board of Education, setting the stage for a return of science teaching that broadly accepts the theory of evolution, according to preliminary election results.

With just 6 districts of 1,990 yet to report as of 8 a.m. Central time today, two conservatives — including incumbent Connie Morris, a former west Kansas teacher and author who had described evolution as “a nice bedtime story” — appear to have been defeated decisively by two moderates in the Republican primary elections. One moderate incumbent, Janet Waugh from the Kansas City area, held on to her seat in the Democratic primary.

If her fellow moderates prevailed, Ms. Waugh said last week, “we need to revisit the minutes and every decision that was 6-4, re-vote.”

Ms. Morris lost to Sally Cauble, a teacher from Liberal, who has favored a return to traditional science standards.

Taking another seat from the conservatives in the Republican primary was Jana Shaver of Independence, a former teacher and administrator, who ran far ahead of Brad Patzer. Mr. Patzer is the son-in-law of the current board member Iris Van Meter, who did not seek reelection.

In another closely fought Republican race, in the Kansas City-Olathe district, Harry E. McDonald, a retired biology teacher, lost to the conservative incumbent John W. Bacon, an accountant.

The results seem likely to give the moderates a 6-4 edge on the 10-member board when it takes over in January. Half the members of the board are elected every two years. The [election results](#) are not final until certified by the Kansas Secretary of State, Ron Thornburgh, following an official canvas.

Both moderate Republican winners face Democratic opponents in November, but the [Democrats](#) are moderates as well, favoring a return to the traditional science standards that prevailed before a conservative majority elected in 2004 passed new rules for teaching science. Those rules, enacted last November, called for classroom critiques of Darwin’s theory. Ms. Waugh, the Democrat, does not face [a Republican](#) opponent in the general election.

The changes in the science standards, favored by advocates of intelligent design who believe life is too complex to have been created by natural events, put Kansas at the vanguard of efforts by religious advocates critical explanations of the origin of life that do not include a creator. But intelligent design was not referenced in the Kansas standards.

The curriculum changes, coming after years of see-sawing power struggles between moderates and conservatives, drew widespread ridicule and, critics complained, threatened Kansas's high standing in national education circles. But Steve E. Abrams, the chairman of the board and a veterinarian from Arkansas City, said the changes only subjected evolution to critical scientific scrutiny.

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