Science Standards of Learning

for Virginia Public Schools

Board of Education
Commonwealth of Virginia

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Board of Education
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Notice to Reader

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Preface

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education published Standards of Learning in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science for kindergarten through grade 12. Subsequently, Standards of Learning were developed for all academic content areas. The Standards of Learning provide a framework for instructional programs designed to raise the academic achievement of all students in Virginia and to prepare students for post-secondary success. School divisions and teachers incorporate the standards in local curriculum and classroom instruction.

The Standards of Learning set reasonable targets and expectations for what teachers must teach and students must learn. The standards are not intended to encompass the entire curriculum for a given grade level or course or to prescribe how the content should be taught; the standards are to be incorporated into a broader, locally designed curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to go beyond the standards and select instructional strategies and assessment methods appropriate for their students.

The Standards of Learning were developed through a series of public hearings and the efforts of parents, teachers, representatives from higher education, science education organizations, and business and industry leaders. The standards set clear and concise academic expectations for young people. Parents are encouraged to work with their children to help them achieve these academic standards.

Introduction

The *Science Standards of Learning* for Virginia Public Schools identify academic content for essential components of the science curriculum at different grade levels. The content of the standards, in conjunction with effective instruction, provide a platform for creating scientifically literate students. The *Science Standards of Learning* reflect a vertical progression of content and practices. The Standards of Learning contain content strands or topics that progress in complexity as they are studied at various grade levels in grades K-5 and are represented indirectly throughout the middle and high school courses. These strands are

- Scientific and Engineering Practices
- Force, Motion, and Energy
- Matter
- Living Systems and Processes
- Earth and Space Systems
- Earth Resources

Six critical components for achieving science literacy are 1) Goals; 2) Investigate and Understand; 3) Nature of Science; 4) Science and Engineering Practices; 5) K-12 Safety; and 6) Instructional Technology. These six components support the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and an integrated instructional approach that incorporates science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It is imperative to science instruction that the local curriculum consider and address how these components are incorporated in the design of the K-12 science program.

Goals

The *Science Standards of Learning* for Virginia Public Schools serve as a framework for educators to meet science education goals and support students' investigation of the natural world. The goals of science instruction include

- Use scientific processes to safely investigate the natural world;
- Develop the scientific knowledge, skills, and attributes to be successful in college, explore science-related careers and interests, and be work-force ready ;
- Develop scientific dispositions and habits of mind (collaboration, curiosity, creativity, demand for verification, open-mindedness, respect for logical and rational thinking, objectivity, learning from mistakes, patience, and persistence);
- Possess significant knowledge of science to be informed consumers with the ability to communicate and use science in their everyday lives and engage in public discussions;
- Make informed decisions regarding contemporary civic, environmental, and economic issues;
- Apply knowledge of mathematics and science in an authentic way using the engineering design process to solve societal problems; and
- Develop an understanding of the interrelationship of science with technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Investigate and Understand

Many of the standards in the *Science Standards of Learning* begin with the phrase "Students will investigate and understand." This phrase communicates the wide range of science knowledge, skills, and practices required to effectively investigate and understand the natural world. "Investigate" refers to scientific methodology and implies systematic use of the following inquiry and engineering skills:

- Asking questions and defining problems
- Planning and carrying out investigations
- Interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
- Constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
- Developing and using models
- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

"Understand" refers to the application of scientific knowledge including the ability to:

- apply understanding of key science concepts and the nature of science;
- use important information, key definitions, terminology, and facts to make judgments about information in terms of its accuracy, precision, consistency, or effectiveness;
- apply information and principles to new problems or situations, recognizing what information is required for a particular situation, using the information to explain new phenomena, and determining when there are exceptions;
- explain the information in one's own words, comprehend how the information is related to other key facts, and suggest additional interpretations of its meaning or importance;
- think critically, problem-solve, and make decisions;
- analyze the underlying details of important facts and principles, recognizing the key relations and patterns that are not always readily visible; and
- arrange and combine important facts, principles, and other information to produce a new idea, plan, procedure, or product to solve problems.

Therefore, the use of "investigate and understand" allows each content standard to become the basis for a broad range of teaching objectives, which the school division will develop and refine to meet the intent of the *Science Standards of Learning*.

Nature of Science

Science is not a mere accumulation of facts; instead, it is a discipline with common practices for understanding the natural world. The nature of science describes these common practices employed by scientists and it reflects the intrinsic values and assumptions of scientific knowledge. The nature of science explains the functioning of science, what science is, how it develops and builds the knowledge it generates, and the methodology used to disseminate and validate knowledge.

Regardless of the career that a student chooses to pursue, all students should be science literate with an understanding of the nature of science and the scientific knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions.

Science and Engineering Practices

Science utilizes observation and experimentation along with existing scientific knowledge, mathematics, and engineering technologies to answer questions about the natural world. Engineering employs existing scientific knowledge, mathematics, and technology to create, design, and develop new devices, objects or technology to meet the needs of society.

By utilizing both scientific and engineering practices in the science classroom, students develop a deeper understanding and competences with techniques at the heart of each discipline.

K-12 Safety

In implementing the *Science Standards of Learning*, teachers must be certain that students know how to follow safety guidelines, demonstrate appropriate laboratory safety techniques, and use equipment safely while working individually and in groups.

Safety must be given the highest priority in implementing the K-12 instructional program for science. Correct and safe techniques, as well as wise selection of experiments, resources, materials, and field experiences appropriate to age levels, must be carefully considered with regard to the safety precautions for every instructional activity. Safe science classrooms require thorough planning, careful management, and constant monitoring of student activities. Class enrollment should not exceed the designed capacity of the room.

Teachers must be knowledgeable of the properties, use, and proper disposal of all chemicals that may be judged as hazardous before their use in an instructional activity. Such information is referenced through Safety Data Sheets (SDS), which conform to the requirements of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals (GHS), effective May 2012. The identified precautions involving the use of goggles, gloves, aprons, and fume hoods must be followed as prescribed.

The following sources offer further guidance on science safety:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration;
- International Science and Engineering Fair rules;
- Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Science Safety Handbook on the VDOE Science Instruction webpage;
- American Chemical Society (ACS) resources: *Safety in the Elementary Science Classroom*, *Chemical Safety for Teachers and their Supervisors*, and *Guidelines for Chemical Laboratory Safety* on the ACS webpage; and
- public health departments' and school divisions' protocols and chemical hygiene plans.

Instructional Technology

The primary purpose of the use of instructional technology is to support effective teaching and learning. A secondary purpose is to aid in preparing students for life after their K-12 education by ensuring that they are skillful in using current technology tools and in learning how to use new tools that may benefit their personal and professional lives. As such, the use of current and emerging technology is essential to the K-12 science instructional program.

Effective use of instructional technology in the science classroom requires that technology is integrated throughout the curriculum, is seamless in its application, and includes instrumentation oriented toward the teaching and learning of science concepts, skills, and processes. In addition to traditional instruments of science, such as microscopes, lab ware, and data-collecting apparatus, the technology used should also include computers, robotics, video-microscopes, graphing calculators, probeware, geospatial technologies, online communication, software, appropriate hardware, and other applicable emerging technologies.

Profile of a Virginia Graduate

The *2018 Science Standards of Learning* support the Profile of a Virginia Graduate through the development and use of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative thinking skills and the applications of civic responsibility in the understanding and applications of science.

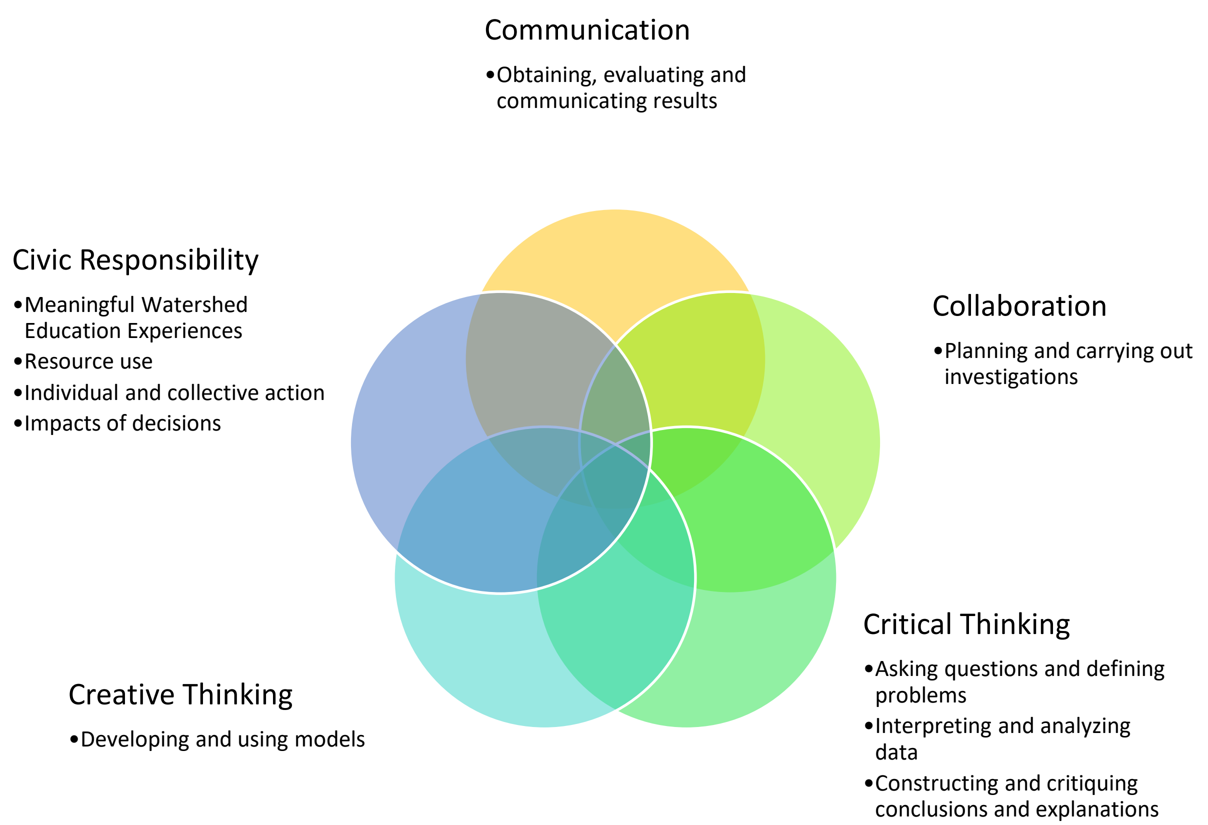

Figure 1: Visual representation of the science skills and processes aligned to the Profile of a Virginia Graduate

Earth Science

The Earth Science standards focus on the complex nature of the Earth system, including Earth's composition, structure, processes, and history; its atmosphere, fresh water, and oceans; and its environment in space as a set of complex, interacting and overlapping systems. The standards emphasize the nature of science as students learn about the development of scientific thought about Earth and space. The standards stress the interpretation of maps, charts, tables, and profiles; the use of technology to collect, analyze, and report data; and the utilization of science skills in systematic investigation. Problem solving and decision-making are integral parts of the standards, especially as related to the costs and benefits of utilizing Earth's resources. Mathematics and computational thinking are important as students advance in their scientific thinking.

ES.1 The student will demonstrate an understanding of scientific and engineering practices by

a) asking questions and defining problems
  - ask questions that arise from careful observation of phenomena, examination of a model or theory, or unexpected results, and/or to seek additional information
  - determine which questions can be investigated within the scope of the school laboratory or field experience
  - generate hypotheses based on research and scientific principles
  - make hypotheses that specify what happens to a dependent variable when an independent variable is manipulated
  - define design problems that involve the development of a process or system with multiple components and criteria

b) planning and carrying out investigations
  - individually and collaboratively plan and conduct observational and experimental investigations
  - plan and conduct investigations to test design solutions in a safe and ethical manner including considerations of environmental, social and personal effects
  - select and use appropriate tools and technology to collect, record, analyze, and evaluate data

c) interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
  - construct and interpret data tables showing independent and dependent variables, repeated trials, and means
  - construct, analyze, and interpret graphical displays of data and consider limitations of data analysis
  - apply mathematical concepts and processes to scientific questions
  - use data in building and revising models, supporting explanations of phenomena, or testing solutions to problems
  - analyze data using tools, technologies, and/or models in order to make valid and reliable scientific claims or determine an optimal design solution

d) constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
    - make quantitative and/or qualitative claims based on data
    - construct and revise explanations based on valid and reliable evidence obtained from a variety of sources, including students' own investigations, models, theories, simulations, and peer review
    - apply scientific ideas, principles, and/or evidence to provide an explanation of phenomena or design solutions
    - construct arguments or counterarguments based on data and evidence
    - differentiate between a scientific hypothesis, theory, and law

e) developing and using models
    - evaluate the merits and limitations of models
    - develop, revise, and/or use models based on evidence to illustrate or predict relationships
    - construct and interpret scales, diagrams, classification charts, graphs, tables, imagery, models, including geologic cross sections and topographic profiles
    - read and interpret topographic and basic geologic maps and globes, including location by latitude and longitude

f) obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information
    - compare, integrate, and evaluate sources of information presented in different media or formats to address a scientific question or solve a problem
    - gather, read, and evaluate scientific and/or technical information from multiple sources, assessing the evidence and credibility of each source
    - communicate scientific and/or technical information about phenomena and/or a design process in multiple formats

ES.2 The student will demonstrate an understanding that there are scientific concepts related to the origin and evolution of the universe. Key ideas include

a) the big bang theory explains the origin of universe;
b) stars, star systems, and galaxies change over long periods of time;
c) characteristics of the sun, planets and their moons, comets, meteors, asteroids, and dwarf planets are determined by materials found in each body; and
d) evidence from space exploration has increased our understanding of the structure and nature of our universe.

ES.3 The student will investigate and understand that Earth is unique in our solar system. Key ideas include

a) Earth supports life because of its relative proximity to the sun and other factors; and
b) the dynamics of the sun-Earth-moon system cause seasons, tides, and eclipses.

ES.4 The student will investigate and understand that there are major rock-forming and ore minerals. Key ideas include

a) analysis of physical and chemical properties supports mineral identification;
b) characteristics of minerals determine the uses of minerals; and
c) minerals originate and are formed in specific ways.

ES.5 The student will investigate and understand that igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks can transform. Key ideas include

a) Earth materials are finite and are transformed over time;
b) the rock cycle models the transformation of rocks;
c) layers of Earth have rocks with specific chemical and physical properties; and
d) plate tectonic and surface processes transform Earth materials.

ES.6 The student will investigate and understand that resource use is complex. Key ideas include

a) global resource use has environmental liabilities and benefits;
b) availability, renewal rates, and economic effects are considerations when using resources;
c) use of Virginia resources has an effect on the environment and the economy; and
d) all energy sources have environmental and economic effects.

ES.7 The student will investigate and understand that plate tectonic theory explains Earth's internal and external geologic processes. Key ideas include

a) convection currents in Earth's interior lead to the movement of plates and influence the distribution of materials in Earth's layers, and may impact the magnetic field;
b) features and processes occur within plates and at plate boundaries;
c) interaction between tectonic plates causes the development of mountain ranges and ocean basins; and
d) evidence of geologic processes is found in Virginia's geologic landscape.

ES.8 The student will investigate and understand that freshwater resources influence and are influenced by geologic processes and human activity. Key ideas include

a) water influences geologic processes including soil development and karst topography;
b) the nature of materials in the subsurface affect the water table and future availability of fresh water;
c) weather and human usage affect freshwater resources, including water locations, quality, and supply; and
d) stream processes and dynamics affect the major watershed systems in Virginia, including the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

ES.9 The student will investigate and understand that many aspects of the history and evolution of Earth and life can be inferred by studying rocks and fossils. Key ideas include

a) traces and remains of ancient, often extinct, life are preserved by various means in sedimentary rocks;
b) superposition, cross-cutting relationships, index fossils, and radioactive decay are methods of dating rocks and Earth events and processes;
c) absolute (radiometric) and relative dating have different applications but can be used together to determine the age of rocks and structures; and
d) rocks and fossils from many different geologic periods and epochs are found in Virginia.

ES.10 The student will investigate and understand that oceans are complex, dynamic systems and are subject to long- and short-term variations. Key ideas include

a) chemical, biological, and physical changes affect the oceans;
b) environmental and geologic occurrences affect ocean dynamics;
c) unevenly distributed heat in the oceans drives much of Earth's weather;
d) features of the sea floor reflect tectonic and other geological processes; and
e) human actions, including economic and public policy issues, affect oceans and the coastal zone including the Chesapeake Bay.

ES.11 The student will investigate and understand that the atmosphere is a complex, dynamic system and is subject to long-and short-term variations. Key ideas include

a) the composition of the atmosphere is critical to most forms of life;
b) biologic and geologic interactions over long and short time spans change the atmospheric composition;
c) natural events and human actions may stress atmospheric regulation mechanisms; and
d) human actions, including economic and policy decisions, affect the atmosphere.

ES.12 The student will investigate and understand that Earth's weather and climate are the result of the interaction of the sun's energy with the atmosphere, oceans, and the land. Key ideas include

a) weather involves the reflection, absorption, storage, and redistribution of energy over short to medium time spans;
b) weather patterns can be predicted based on changes in current conditions;
c) extreme imbalances in energy distribution in the oceans, atmosphere, and the land may lead to severe weather conditions;
d) models based on current conditions are used to predict weather phenomena; and
e) changes in the atmosphere and the oceans due to natural and human activity affect global climate.