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# Science Standards of Learning

for  
Virginia  
Public Schools



**Board of Education  
Commonwealth of Virginia**

**October 2018**

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# Science Standards of Learning

## for Virginia Public Schools

**Adopted October 2018 by the  
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.

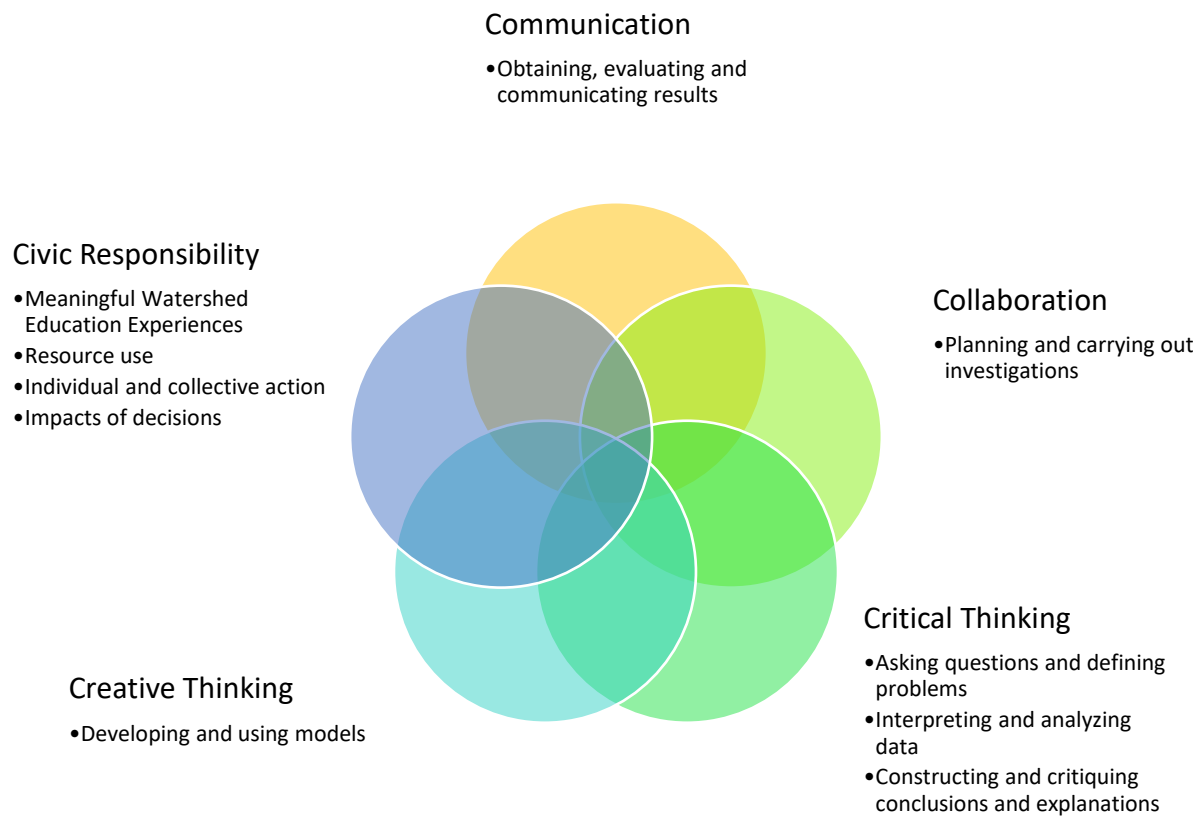


Figure 1: Visual representation of the science skills and processes aligned to the Profile of a Virginia Graduate



## **Kindergarten**

### *Using my senses to understand my world*

In science, kindergarten students use their senses to make observations of the characteristics and interactions of objects in their world. Students study the characteristics of water and the basic needs of living things. They also study the relationship between the sun and Earth through shadows and weather. They determine how their actions can change the motion of objects and learn how they can make a difference in their world. Throughout the elementary years, students will develop scientific skills, supported by mathematics and computational thinking, as they learn science content. In kindergarten, students will develop skills in posing simple questions, conducting simple investigations, observing, classifying, and communicating information about the natural world.

### **Scientific and Engineering Practices**

- K.1 The student will demonstrate an understanding of scientific and engineering practices by
- a) asking questions and defining problems
    - ask questions based on observations
    - identify a problem based on need
    - make predictions based on observations
  - b) planning and carrying out investigations
    - make observations to collect data
    - identify characteristics and properties of objects through observations
    - measure the relative length and weight of common objects
    - record information from investigations
  - c) interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
    - describe patterns
    - classify and/or sequence objects based on a single physical characteristic or property
    - organize and represent data
    - read and interpret data in object graphs, picture graphs, and tables
  - d) constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
    - make simple conclusions based on data or observations
  - e) developing and using models
    - distinguish between a model and an actual object
  - f) obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information
    - communicate comparative measures (e.g., heavier, lighter, longer, shorter, more, less, hotter, colder)
    - communicate observations using pictures, drawings, and/or speech

## **Force, Motion, and Energy**

- K.2 The student will investigate and understand that pushes and pulls affect the motion of objects. Key ideas include
- a) pushes and pulls can cause an object to move;
  - b) pushes and pulls can change the direction of an object; and
  - c) changes in motion are related to the strength of the push or pull.

## **Matter**

- K.3 The student will investigate and understand that physical properties of an object can be described. Properties include
- a) colors;
  - b) shapes and forms;
  - c) textures and feel; and
  - d) relative sizes and weights of objects.
- K.4 The student will investigate and understand that water is important in our daily lives and has properties. Key ideas include
- a) water has many uses;
  - b) water can be found in many places;
  - c) water occurs in different phases; and
  - d) water flows downhill.

## **Living Systems and Processes**

- K.5 The students will investigate and understand that senses allow humans to seek, find, take in, and react or respond to different information. Key ideas include
- a) the five basic senses correspond to specific human body structures; and
  - b) senses are used in our daily lives.
- K.6 The student will investigate and understand that there are differences between living organisms and nonliving objects. Key ideas include
- a) all things can be classified as living or nonliving; and
  - b) living organisms have certain characteristics that distinguish them from nonliving objects.
- K.7 The student will investigate and understand that plants and animals have basic needs and life processes. Key ideas include
- a) living things need adequate food, water, shelter, air, and space to survive;
  - b) plants and animals have life cycles; and
  - c) offspring of plants and animals are similar but not identical to their parents or to one another.

## **Earth and Space Systems**

- K.8 The student will investigate and understand that light influences temperature on Earth's surfaces and can cause shadows. Key ideas include
- a) the sun provides light and warms Earth's surface;
  - b) shadows can be produced when sunlight or artificial light is blocked by an object; and
  - c) objects in shadows and objects in sunlight have different temperatures.
- K.9 The student will investigate and understand that there are patterns in nature. Key patterns include
- a) daily weather;
  - b) seasonal changes; and
  - c) day and night.
- K.10 The student will investigate and understand that change occurs over time. Key ideas include
- a) natural and human-made things change over time;
  - b) living and nonliving things change over time;
  - c) changes can be observed and measured; and
  - d) changes may be fast or slow.

## **Earth Resources**

- K.11 The student will investigate and understand that humans use resources. Key ideas include
- a) some materials and objects can be used over and over again;
  - b) materials can be recycled; and
  - c) choices we make impact the air, water, land and living things.