



Science Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework

Grade Six

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Grade Six Science Strand

Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic

This strand represents a set of inquiry skills that defines what a student should be able to do when conducting activities and investigations. The various skill categories are described in the “Investigate and Understand” section of the Introduction to the *Science Standards of Learning*, and the skills in science standards 6.1 represent more specifically what a student should be able to do as a result of science experiences in sixth grade. Across the grade levels, the skills in the “Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic” strand form a nearly continuous sequence of investigative skills. (Please note Appendix, “Science Skills, Scope, & Sequence.”) It is important that the classroom teacher understands how the skills in standard 6.1 are a key part of this sequence (i.e., K.1, K.2, 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 5.1). The sixth grade curriculum should ensure that skills from preceding grades are continuously reinforced and developed.

Strand: Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic

Standard 6.1

The student will plan and conduct investigations in which

- a) observations are made involving fine discrimination between similar objects and organisms;
- b) a classification system is developed based on multiple attributes;
- c) precise and approximate measurements are recorded;
- d) scale models are used to estimate distance, volume, and quantity;
- e) hypotheses are stated in ways that identify the independent (manipulated) and dependent (responding) variables;
- f) a method is devised to test the validity of predictions and inferences;
- g) one variable is manipulated over time, using many repeated trials;
- h) data are collected, recorded, analyzed, and reported using appropriate metric measurements;
- i) data are organized and communicated through graphical representation (graphs, charts, and diagrams);
- j) models are designed to explain a sequence; and
- k) an understanding of the nature of science is developed and reinforced.

Understanding the Standard

The skills described in standard 6.1 are intended to define the “investigate” component of all of the other sixth grade standards (6.2–6.9). The intent of standard 6.1 is that students will continue to develop a range of inquiry skills and achieve proficiency with those skills in the context of the concepts developed at the sixth grade. Standard 6.1 does not require a discrete unit on scientific investigation because the inquiry skills that make up the standard should be incorporated in all the other sixth grade standards. It is also intended that by developing these skills, students will achieve greater understanding of scientific inquiry and the nature of science, as well as more fully grasp the content-related concepts in the standards.

Standard 6.1

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To communicate an observation accurately, one must provide critical details of exactly what is being observed. Using that information, students will be able to differentiate definitively between or among similar objects and/or organisms.• In an effective classification system, accurate comparisons and contrasts are made.• Systematic investigations require accurate measurements; however, in the absence of precision tools, observers must record careful estimations.• Scale models must maintain relative values of size and/or quantity in order to maintain the integrity of the object or topic being modeled.• An <i>experiment</i> is a structured test of a hypothesis. A <i>hypothesis</i> is stated in terms of a testable relationship.• A scientific <i>prediction</i> is a forecast about what may happen in some future situation. It is based on the application of scientific principle and factual information. An <i>inference</i> is a conclusion based on evidence about events that have already occurred.• Accurate observations and evidence are necessary to draw realistic and plausible conclusions.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make observations that can be used to discriminate similar objects and organisms, paying attention to fine detail.• develop a classification key that uses numerous characteristics.• make precise and consistent measurements and estimations.• create approximate scale models to demonstrate an understanding of distance, volume, and quantity.• differentiate between independent (manipulated) and dependent (responding) variables in a hypothesis.• compare and contrast predictions and inferences. Analyze and judge the evidence, observations, scientific principles, and data used in making predictions and inferences.• design an experiment in which one variable is manipulated over many trials.• collect, record, analyze, and report data, using metric terminology.• organize and communicate data, using graphs (bar, line, and circle), charts, and diagrams.• design a model that explains a sequence, for example, the sequence of events involved in the process of photosynthesis.

Standard 6.1 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In order to conduct an experiment, one must recognize all of the potential variables that can affect an outcome.• In a scientific investigation, data should be collected, recorded, analyzed, and reported using appropriate metric measurement.• In a scientific investigation, data should be organized and communicated through appropriate graphical representation (graph, chart, table, and diagram).• Models provide a way of visually representing abstract concepts. The use of models permits students to order events or processes.• Patterns discerned from direct observations can be the basis for predictions or hypotheses that attempt to explain the mechanism responsible for the pattern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• propose hypotheses or predictions from observed patterns.

Grade Six Science Strand

Force, Motion, and Energy

The strand focuses on student understanding of what force, motion, and energy are and how the concepts are connected. The major topics developed in this strand include magnetism; types of motion; simple machines; and energy forms and transformations, especially electricity, sound, and light. This strand includes science standards K.3, 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, 4.3, 5.2, 5.3, 6.2, and 6.3.

Strand: Force, Motion, and Energy

Standard 6.2

The student will investigate and understand basic sources of energy, their origins, transformations, and uses. Key concepts include

- a) potential and kinetic energy;
- b) the role of the sun in the formation of most energy sources on Earth;
- c) nonrenewable energy sources (fossil fuels, including petroleum, natural gas, and coal);
- d) renewable energy sources (wood, wind, hydro, geothermal, tidal, and solar); and
- e) energy transformations (heat/light to mechanical, chemical, and electrical energy).

Understanding the Standard

Most sources of energy on the Earth are the result of solar radiation, either energy the Earth is currently receiving or energy that has been stored as fossil fuels. Heat energy also comes from the Earth's interior. All energy exists in two basic forms, — kinetic and potential. Understanding the forms of energy and their transformations will provide the foundation for students to investigate the transfer of energy within living and Earth systems as well as to understand chemical reactions, force, and motion. This standard builds upon concepts of energy sources introduced in science standard 3.11. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.2

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Potential energy</i> is energy that is not “in use” and available to do work. <i>Kinetic energy</i> is energy that is “in use” — the energy a moving object has due to its motion. For example, moving water and wind have kinetic energy. The chemical energy in fossil fuels is potential energy until it is released.• Some important sources of energy include fossil fuels, wood, wind, water (hydropower), the sun (solar energy), and the Earth’s interior.• Heat and light can be converted into mechanical energy, chemical energy, and electrical energy and back again.• Solar energy from the ancient past is stored in fossil fuels, such as coal and petroleum. Fossil fuels are rich in the elements carbon and hydrogen. These sources of energy take very long periods of time to form and once depleted, are essentially nonrenewable.• Many of the Earth’s energy resources are available on a perpetual basis. These include solar, wind, water, and geothermal energy. Some energy sources can be replenished over relatively short periods of time. These include wood and other biomass. All are considered renewable.• Modern industrial society is dependent upon energy. Fossil fuels are the major sources of energy in developed and industrialized nations.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comprehend and apply basic terminology related to energy sources and transformations.• compare and contrast potential and kinetic energy through common examples found in the natural environment.• create and interpret a model or diagram of an energy transformation.• analyze and describe the transformations of energy involved with the formation and burning of coal and other fossil fuels.• compare and contrast renewable and nonrenewable energy sources.• design an investigation that demonstrates light energy being transformed into other forms of energy.• design an application of the use of solar and wind energy.• chart and analyze the energy a person uses during a 24-hour period and determine the sources.• compare and contrast energy sources in terms of their origins, how they are utilized, and their availability.• analyze the advantages and disadvantages of using various energy sources.

Standard 6.2 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• analyze and describe how the United States’ energy use has changed over time.• predict the impact of unanticipated energy shortages.

Strand: Force, Motion, and Energy

Standard 6.3

The student will investigate and understand the role of solar energy in driving most natural processes within the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and on the Earth's surface. Key concepts include

- a) the Earth's energy budget;
- b) the role of radiation and convection in the distribution of energy;
- c) the motion of the atmosphere and the oceans;
- d) cloud formation; and
- e) the role of heat energy in weather-related phenomena including thunderstorms and hurricanes.

Understanding the Standard

The key concepts defined in this standard are intended to expand student understanding of the effects of solar radiation entering the Earth's atmosphere on weather and ocean current patterns. The distribution of energy through convection and radiation are explored as students study cloud formation and movement patterns of the atmosphere and the world's oceans. This standard is closely related to standards 6.2 and 6.6 and builds on the weather concepts developed in standard 4.6 and concepts of visible light in standard 5.3. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.3

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Earth receives only a very small portion of the sun’s energy, yet this energy is responsible for powering the motion of the atmosphere, the oceans, and many processes at the Earth’s surface.• Solar radiation is made up of different types of radiation (including infrared, visible light, and ultraviolet).• Incoming solar radiation is in close balance with the energy that leaves the atmosphere; otherwise the Earth would heat up or cool down. Excess carbon dioxide and other gases may disrupt this balance, creating a Greenhouse Effect.• About one third of the sun’s incoming energy is reflected back out to space. About one half of the energy striking the Earth is absorbed by the Earth’s surface.• The Earth’s surface is heated unequally.• When air or water is heated, the molecules move faster and farther apart, reducing their density and causing them to rise. Cooler air or water molecules move more slowly and are denser than warm air or water. Warm air or water rising coupled with cooler air or water descending forms a cyclic rising/falling pattern called <i>convection</i>.• Radiation and convection from the Earth’s surface transfer heat energy. This energy powers the global circulation of the atmosphere and the oceans on our planet.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comprehend and apply basic terminology related to solar energy, including <i>wavelength</i>; <i>ultraviolet</i>, <i>visible</i>, and <i>infrared radiation</i>; and <i>reflection</i> and <i>absorption</i>.• analyze and interpret a chart or diagram showing the Earth’s energy budget.• analyze, model, and explain the Greenhouse Effect in terms of the energy entering and leaving the atmosphere.• design an investigation to determine the effect of sunlight on the heating of a surface.• analyze the role of heating and cooling in the formation of clouds.• order the sequence of events that takes place in the formation of a cloud.• analyze and explain how convection currents occur and how they distribute heat energy in the atmosphere and oceans.

Standard 6.3 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As bodies of water (oceans, lakes, rivers, etc.) absorb heat energy, the water evaporates forming clouds.• Warm, moist air is less dense than cold, dry air, so it rises relative to colder, drier air. As warm, moist air rises, it actually gives off some heat as the moisture condenses. Clouds are not gaseous water vapor; rather they are minute, condensed water particles.• Some thunderstorms are formed where the land is strongly heated. Hurricanes form over warm, tropical water and are fed by the energy of that water.	

Grade Six Science Strand

Matter

This strand focuses on the description, physical properties, and basic structure of matter. The major topics developed in this strand include concepts related to the basic description of objects, states of matter (solids, liquids, and gases – especially water), phase changes, mass and volume, and the structure of classification of matter. This strand includes science standards K.4, K.5, 1.3, 2.3, 3.3, 5.4, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6.

Standard 6.4

The student will investigate and understand that all matter is made up of atoms. Key concepts include

- a) atoms are made up of electrons, protons, and neutrons;
- b) atoms of any element are alike but are different from atoms of other elements;
- c) elements may be represented by chemical symbols;
- d) two or more atoms may be chemically combined;
- e) compounds may be represented by chemical formulas;
- f) chemical equations can be used to model chemical changes; and
- g) a limited number of elements comprise the largest portion of the solid Earth, living matter, the oceans, and the atmosphere.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.4 focuses on an understanding of the basic structure of the atom, including electrons, protons, and neutrons. The concepts defined in standard 6.4 build on students' basic understanding of the structure of matter as introduced in science standards 3.3 and 5.4. Knowledge of basic chemistry concepts is fundamental to understanding the physical sciences, life processes, and Earth and environmental science ideas. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.4

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The basic structural components of the typical atom are <i>electrons</i>, <i>protons</i>, and <i>neutrons</i>. Protons and neutrons comprise the <i>nucleus</i> of an atom.• An <i>element</i> is a form of matter made up of one type of atom. The atoms of an element are basically alike, though the number of neutrons may vary.• The atoms of one element differ from those of another element in the number of protons.• Elements can be represented by chemical symbols.• Two or more atoms of different elements may combine to form a <i>compound</i>.• Compounds can be represented by chemical formulas. Each different element in the compound is represented by its unique symbol. The number of each type of element in the compound (other than 1) is represented by a small number (the subscript) to the right of the element symbol.• Chemical equations can be used to model chemical changes, illustrating how elements become rearranged in a chemical reaction.• A limited number of elements, including silicon, aluminum, iron, sodium, calcium, potassium, magnesium, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon, form the largest portion of the Earth's crust, living matter, the oceans, and the atmosphere.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• create and interpret a simplified model of the structure of an atom.• compare and contrast the atomic structure of two different elements.• explain that elements are represented by symbols.• identify the name and number of each element present in a simple molecule or compound, such as O₂, H₂O, CO₂, or CaCO₃.• model a simple chemical change with an equation and account for all atoms. Distinguish the types of elements and number of each element in the chemical equation. (Balancing equations will be further developed in Physical Science).• name some of the predominant elements found in the atmosphere, the oceans, living matter, and the Earth's crust.

Standard 6.5

The student will investigate and understand the unique properties and characteristics of water and its roles in the natural and human-made environment. Key concepts include

- a) water as the universal solvent;
- b) the properties of water in all three states;
- c) the action of water in physical and chemical weathering;
- d) the ability of large bodies of water to store heat and moderate climate;
- e) the origin and occurrence of water on Earth;
- f) the importance of water for agriculture, power generation, and public health; and
- g) the importance of protecting and maintaining water resources.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.5 is intended to develop student understanding of the unique properties of water and the importance of protecting and managing water resources. Understanding the structure, properties, and behavior of the water molecule is fundamental to understanding more complex environmental systems. Concepts like solubility, surface tension, cohesion, adhesion, density, condensation, and evaporation can be investigated to appreciate why the properties of water are critical to life processes and living things. This standard also introduces the concept of the ability of large bodies of water to moderate the climate on land. The connections between water resources and agriculture, power generation, and public health are also investigated. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.5

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water is the only compound that commonly exists in all three states (solid, liquid, gas) on Earth. The unique properties of water are a major factor in the ability of our planet to sustain life.• Among water’s unique properties is that one side of each water molecule is slightly negative and the other is slightly positive. Individual water molecules, therefore, attract other water molecules like little magnets as the slightly positive portion of a water molecule is attracted to the slightly negative portion of an adjacent water molecule. In this way, water molecules “stick together.”• A large number of substances will “dissolve” in water. For this reason, water is often called the universal solvent.• Water is able to absorb heat energy without showing relatively large changes in temperature. Large bodies of water act to moderate the climate of surrounding areas by absorbing heat in summer and slowly releasing that heat in the winter. For this reason, the climate near large bodies of water is slightly milder than areas without large bodies of water.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comprehend and apply key terminology related to water and its properties and uses.• model and explain the shape and composition of a water molecule.• design an investigation to determine the relative density of liquid and solid water at various temperatures.• compare the relative densities of liquid and solid water.• comprehend the adhesive and cohesive properties of water.• design an investigation to determine the effects of heat on the states of water.• model and explain why ice is less dense than liquid water.• relate the three states of water to the water cycle.• design an investigation to demonstrate the ability of water to dissolve materials.• design an investigation to determine the presence of water in plant material (e.g., a fruit).• infer how the unique properties of water are key to the life processes of organisms.

Standard 6.5 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional properties of water are its high surface tension and the large range of temperature (0–100 degrees Celsius) in which it can be found in the liquid state, as well as the fact that, unlike other substances, it expands when it freezes. Ice is less dense than liquid water.• Water (rain, ice, snow) has shaped our environment by physically and chemically weathering rock and soil and transporting sediments. Freezing water can break rock without any change in the minerals that form the rock (physical weathering). This usually produces small particles and sand. Water with dissolved gases and other chemicals causes the minerals in rocks to be changed, leading to the deterioration of the rock (chemical weathering).• Scientific evidence indicates that the Earth formed about four-and-a-half billion years ago from the dust and debris orbiting the sun. Due to gravity, this debris became compacted and grew quite hot, creating hot gases, including water vapor and carbon dioxide. Over millions of years, the Earth and its gases cooled, and seas are believed to have formed when the Earth cooled enough for water vapor in the atmosphere to condense.• Most of Earth’s water is salt water in the oceans (97 percent). Available non-frozen, fresh water makes up less than 1 percent of the water on Earth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• design an investigation to model the action of freezing water on rock material.• design an investigation to model the action of acidified water on building materials such as concrete, limestone, or marble.• chart, record, and describe evidence of chemical weathering in the local environment.• explain the role of water in power generation.• analyze and explain the difference in average winter temperatures among areas in central and western Virginia and cities and counties along the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic coast.• describe the importance of careful management of water resources.

Standard 6.5 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water occurs on Earth in oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, and in rock layers underground called aquifers. A large amount of water is also found in the bodies of living things.• The first human settlements were established near springs, rivers, and lakes. Reliable fresh water sources and irrigation systems allowed civilizations to grow and flourish. As cities grew, different strategies (tunnels, aqueducts, wells, cisterns, pumps, reservoirs) were employed to collect water..• Water is essential for agriculture. Crops watered by reliable irrigation systems are more productive, and harvests more dependable.• Water is an important resource used in power generation. Hydroelectric power plants make use of the kinetic energy of water as it flows through turbines. Water is also heated in power plants and turned to steam. The steam is used to turn turbines, which generate electricity.• In the past, streams and rivers were often used to dispose of human waste, and open sewers were common. During the mid-1800s, public health officials recognized the connection between disease outbreaks and contamination of public wells and drinking water. Advances in water treatment and sanitary sewers have helped eliminate diseases associated with human waste.	

Standard 6.6

The student will investigate and understand the properties of air and the structure and dynamics of the Earth's atmosphere. Key concepts include

- a) air as a mixture of gaseous elements and compounds;
- b) air pressure, temperature, and humidity;
- c) how the atmosphere changes with altitude;
- d) natural and human-caused changes to the atmosphere;
- e) the relationship of atmospheric measures and weather conditions;
- f) basic information from weather maps including fronts, systems, and basic measurements; and
- g) the importance of protecting and maintaining air quality.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.6 is intended to provide students with a basic understanding of the properties of air, the structure of the atmosphere, weather, and air quality. Students need to understand there are both natural and human-caused changes to the atmosphere and that the results of these changes are not yet fully understood. A basic understanding of weather and weather prediction builds on the key concepts in standard 4.6. Standard 6.6 also focuses on student understanding of air quality as an important parameter of human and environmental health. It is important to make the obvious connections between this standard and the other sixth grade standards. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.6

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Air is a mixture of gaseous elements and compounds. These include nitrogen, oxygen, water, argon and carbon dioxide. Nitrogen makes up the largest proportion of air.• Air exerts pressure. Air pressure decreases as altitude increases.• Moisture in the air is called <i>humidity</i>.• The atmosphere is made up of layers (troposphere, stratosphere, mesosphere, and thermosphere) that have distinct characteristics.• Temperature decreases as altitude increases in the lowest layer of the atmosphere.• Most of the air that makes up the atmosphere is found in the troposphere(the lowest layer). Virtually all weather takes place there.• Forest fires and volcanic eruptions are two natural processes that affect the Earth’s atmosphere. Many gaseous compounds and particles are released into the atmosphere by human activity. All of the effects of these materials are not yet fully understood.• The amounts of heat energy and water vapor in the air and the pressure of the air largely determine what the weather conditions are.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comprehend and apply basic terminology related to air and the atmosphere.• identify the composition and physical characteristics of the atmosphere.• analyze and interpret charts and graphs of the atmosphere in terms of temperature and pressure.• measure and record air temperature, air pressure, and humidity, using appropriate units of measurement and tools.• analyze and explain some of the effects that natural events and human activities may have on weather, atmosphere, and climate.• map the movement of cold and warm fronts and interpret their effects on observable weather conditions.• design an investigation to relate temperature, barometric pressure, and humidity to changing weather conditions.• interpret basic weather maps and make forecasts based on the information presented.• compare and contrast cloud types and relate cloud types to weather conditions.

Standard 6.6 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weather maps show much useful information about descriptive air measurements, observations, and boundaries between air masses (fronts). The curved lines showing areas of equal air pressure and temperature are key features of weather maps. Weather maps are important for understanding and predicting the weather.• Clouds are important indicators of atmospheric conditions. Clouds are found at various levels within the troposphere. Three major types of clouds are cumulus, stratus, and cirrus.• <i>Ozone</i>, a form of oxygen, can form near the surface when exhaust pollutants react with sunlight. This pollutant can cause health problems. Naturally occurring ozone is also found in the upper atmosphere and helps to shield the Earth from ultraviolet radiation.• Maintaining good air quality is a crucial goal for modern society, and it is everyone's responsibility to work toward it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• compare and contrast types of precipitation.• compare and contrast weather-related phenomena, including thunderstorms, tornadoes, hurricanes, and drought.• evaluate their own roles in protecting air quality.

Grade Six Science Strand

Living Systems

The strand begins in second grade and builds from basic to more complex understandings of a system, both at the ecosystem level and at the level of the cell. The concept of kingdoms of organisms and a general classification of organisms are also presented. The other major topics developed in the strand include the types of relationships among organisms in a food chain, different types of environments and the organisms they support, and the relationship between organisms and their nonliving environment. This strand includes science standards 2.5, 3.5, 3.6, 4.5, 5.5, and 6.7.

Strand: Living Systems

Standard 6.7

The student will investigate and understand the natural processes and human interactions that affect watershed systems. Key concepts include

- a) the health of ecosystems and the abiotic factors of a watershed;
- b) the location and structure of Virginia's regional watershed systems;
- c) divides, tributaries, river systems, and river and stream processes;
- d) wetlands;
- e) estuaries;
- f) major conservation, health, and safety issues associated with watersheds; and
- g) water monitoring and analysis using field equipment including hand-held technology.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.7 is intended to provide students with a basic understanding of how natural processes and human interactions impact watershed systems. This includes an understanding of the physical geography of Virginia's portions of the three major watershed systems (the Chesapeake Bay, the North Carolina sounds, and the Gulf of Mexico) and the various features associated with moving water (surface and groundwater). Wetlands have become an important focus of scientists as we learn their role in flood and erosion control as well as their importance as habitat for many species of living things. Students are introduced to major safety and conservation issues associated with watersheds and become familiar with the testing parameters and tools used in the field. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.7

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An ecosystem is made up of the living community and the nonliving factors that affect it. The health of an ecosystem is directly related to water quality.• Abiotic factors determine ecosystem type and its distribution of plants and animals as well as the usage of land by people. Abiotic factors include water supply, topography, landforms, geology, soils, sunlight, and air quality/O₂ availability.• Human activities can alter abiotic components and thus accelerate or decelerate natural processes. For example, people can affect the rate of natural erosion. Plowing cropland can cause greater erosion, while planting trees can prevent it. Flood protection/wetland loss is another example.• A <i>watershed</i> is the land that water flows across or through on its way to a stream, lake, wetland, or other body of water. Areas of higher elevations, such as ridgelines and divides, separate watersheds.• The three major regional watersheds systems in Virginia lead to the Chesapeake Bay, the North Carolina sounds, or the Gulf of Mexico.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• comprehend and apply basic terminology related to watersheds.• use topographic maps to determine the location and size of Virginia’s regional watershed systems.• locate their own local watershed and the rivers and streams associated with it.• design an investigation to model the effects of stream flow on various slopes.• analyze and explain the functioning of wetlands and appraise the value of wetlands to humans.• describe an example of a wetland.• explain what an estuary is and why it is important to people.• propose ways to maintain water quality within a watershed.• explain the factors that affect water quality in a watershed and how those factors can affect an ecosystem.• forecast potential water-related issues that may become important in the future.

Standard 6.7 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• River systems are made up of tributaries of smaller streams that join along their courses. Rivers and streams generally have wide, flat, border areas, called flood plains, onto which water spills out at times of high flow.• Rivers and streams carry and deposit sediment. As water flow decreases in speed, the size of the sediment it carries decreases.• Wetlands form the transition zone between dry land and bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, or bays. Both tidal and non-tidal wetlands perform important water quality functions, including regulating runoff by storing flood waters; reducing erosion by slowing down runoff; maintaining water quality by filtering sediments, trapping nutrients, and breaking down pollutants; and recharging groundwater. They also provide food and shelter for wildlife and fish and nesting and resting areas for migratory birds.• Estuaries perform important functions, such as providing habitat for many organisms and serving as nurseries for their young.• The Chesapeake Bay is an estuary where fresh and salt water meet and are mixed by tides. It is the largest estuary in the contiguous United States and one of the most productive.• Water quality monitoring is the collection of water samples to analyze chemical and/or biological parameters. Simple parameters include pH, temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and the presence of macroinvertebrate organisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• locate and critique a media article or editorial (print or electronic) concerning water use or water quality. Analyze and evaluate the science concepts involved.• argue for and against commercially developing a parcel of land containing a large wetland area. Design and defend a land-use model that minimizes negative impact.• measure, record, and analyze a variety of water quality indicators and describe what they mean.

Grade Six Science Strand

Interrelationships in Earth/Space Systems

The strand focuses on student understanding of how Earth systems are connected and how the Earth interacts with other members of the solar system. The topics developed include shadows; relationships between the sun and the Earth; weather types, patterns, and instruments; properties of soil; characteristics of the ocean environment; and organization of the solar system. This strand includes science standards K.7, 1.6, 2.6, 3.7, 4.6, 5.6, and 6.8.

Strand: Interrelationships in Earth/Space Systems

Standard 6.8

The student will investigate and understand the organization of the solar system and the relationships among the various bodies that comprise it. Key concepts include

- a) the sun, moon, Earth, other planets and their moons, meteors, asteroids, and comets;
- b) relative size of and distance between planets;
- c) the role of gravity;
- d) revolution and rotation;
- e) the mechanics of day and night and the phases of the moon;
- f) the unique properties of Earth as a planet;
- g) the relationship of the Earth's tilt and the seasons;
- h) the cause of tides; and
- i) the history and technology of space exploration.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.8 is intended to provide students with a basic understanding of the solar system, how it is organized, and the relationships among bodies within the solar system. This standard develops an understanding of the Earth as part of the solar system and builds significantly on standards 3.8 and 4.7. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.8

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The solar system consists of the sun, moon, Earth, other planets and their moons, meteors, asteroids, and comets. Each body has its own characteristics and features.• The distance between planets and sizes of the planets varies greatly. The outer, “gas” planets are very large, and the four inner planets are comparatively small and rocky.• Gravity is a force that keeps the planets in motion around the sun. Gravity acts everywhere in the universe.• Planets revolve around the sun, and moons revolve around planets. A planet rotates upon an axis.• As the Earth rotates, different sides of the Earth face toward or away from the sun, thus causing day and night, respectively.• The phases of the moon are caused by its position relative to the Earth and sun.• The Earth is a rocky planet, extensively covered with large oceans of liquid water and having frozen ice caps in its polar regions. The Earth has a protective atmosphere consisting predominantly of nitrogen and oxygen and has a magnetic field. The atmosphere and the magnetic field help shield the Earth’s surface from harmful solar radiation. Scientific evidence indicates that the Earth is about 4.5 billion years old.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• describe the nine planets and their relative positions from the sun.• design and interpret a scale model of the solar system. (A scale model may be a physical representation of an object or concept. It can also be a mathematical representation that uses factors such as ratios, proportions, and percentages.)• explain the role of gravity in the solar system.• compare and contrast revolution and rotation and apply these terms to the relative movements of planets and moons their moons.• model and describe how day and night and the phases of the moon occur.• model and describe how the Earth’s axial tilt and its annual orbit around the sun cause the seasons.• describe the unique characteristics of planet Earth.• discuss the relationship between the gravitational pull of the moon and the cycle of tides.• compare and contrast the ideas of Ptolemy, Aristotle, Copernicus, and Galileo related to the solar system.

Standard 6.8 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seasons are caused by the tilt of the Earth on its axis and, thus, the angle at which sunlight strikes the surface of the Earth during its annual revolution around the sun.• Tides are the result of the gravitational pull of the moon and sun on the surface waters of the Earth.• The ideas of Ptolemy, Aristotle, Copernicus, and Galileo contributed to the development of our understanding of the solar system.• With the development of new technology over the last half-century, our knowledge of the solar system has increased substantially.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create and interpret a timeline highlighting the advancements in solar system exploration over the past half century. This should include information on the first modern rockets, artificial satellites, orbital missions, missions to the moon, Mars robotic explorers, and exploration of the outer planets.

Grade Six Science Strand

Resources

The strand focuses on student understanding of the role of resources in the natural world and how people can utilize those resources in a sustainable way. An important idea represented in this strand is the concept of management of resource use. This begins with basic ideas of conservation and proceeds to more abstract consideration of costs and benefits. The topics developed include conservation of materials, soil and plants as resources, energy use, water, Virginia's resources, and how public policy impacts the environment. This strand includes science standards K.10, 1.8, 2.8, 3.10, 3.11, 4.8, and 6.9.

Standard 6.9

The student will investigate and understand public policy decisions relating to the environment. Key concepts include

- a) management of renewable resources (water, air, soil, plant life, animal life);
- b) management of nonrenewable resources (coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, mineral resources);
- c) the mitigation of land-use and environmental hazards through preventive measures; and
- d) cost/benefit tradeoffs in conservation policies.

Understanding the Standard

Standard 6.9 is intended to develop student understanding of the importance of the Earth's natural resources, the need to manage them, how they are managed, and the analysis of costs and benefits in making decisions about those resources. It applies and builds on the concepts described in several lower grades, especially science standard 4.8. Knowledge gained from this standard will be important to understanding numerous concepts in Life Science and Earth Science. It is intended that students will actively develop scientific investigation, reasoning, and logic skills (6.1) in the context of the key concepts presented in this standard.

Standard 6.9

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<p>The concepts developed in this standard include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• People, as well as other living organisms, are dependent upon the availability of clean water and air and a healthy environment.• Local, state, and federal governments have significant roles in managing and protecting air, water, plant, and wildlife resources.• Modern society is dependent upon many finite resources, including coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear power.• Many renewable and nonrenewable resources are managed by the private sector (private individuals and corporations).• Regulations, incentives, and voluntary efforts help conserve resources and protect environmental quality.• Conservation of resources and environmental protection begin with the individual.• Use of renewable and nonrenewable resources must be considered in terms of their cost/benefit tradeoffs.• Preventive measures, such as pollution prevention or thoughtfully planned and enforced land-use restrictions, can reduce the impact of potential problems in the future.• Pollution prevention and waste management are less costly than cleanup.	<p>In order to meet this standard, it is expected that students should be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• differentiate between renewable and nonrenewable resources.• describe the role of local and state conservation professionals in managing natural resources. These include wildlife protection; forestry and waste management; and air, water, and soil conservation.• analyze resource-use options in everyday activities and determine how personal choices have costs and benefits related to the generation of waste.• analyze how renewable and nonrenewable resources are used and managed within the home, school, and community.• analyze reports, media articles, and other narrative materials related to waste management and resource use to determine various perspectives concerning the costs/benefits in real-life situations.• evaluate the impact of resource use, waste management, and pollution prevention in the school and home environment.

Standard 6.9 (continued)

Overview	Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Renewable resources should be managed so that they produce continuously. Sustainable development makes decisions about long-term use of the land and natural resources for maximum community benefit for the longest time and with the least environmental damage.	