
Science Standards of Learning

for
Virginia
Public Schools



**Board of Education
Commonwealth of Virginia**

October 2018

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**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.

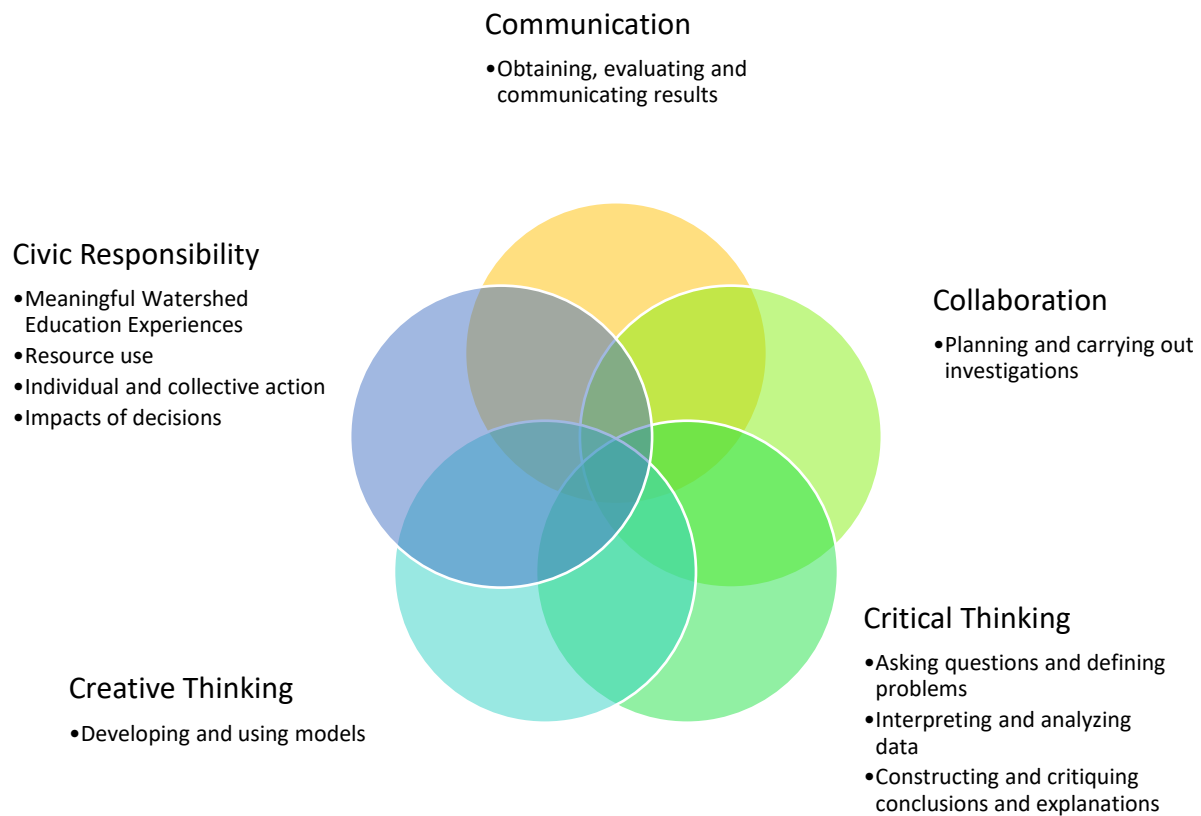


Figure 1: Visual representation of the science skills and processes aligned to the Profile of a Virginia Graduate

Grade Three

Interactions in our world

The focus of science in third grade is interactions in our world. Students continue to study forces and matter by learning about simple machines and by examining the interactions of materials in water. They also look at how plants and animals, including humans, are constantly interacting with the living and nonliving aspects of the environment. This includes examining how adaptations satisfy life needs of plants and the importance of water, soil, and the sun in the survival of plants and animals. Throughout the elementary years, students will develop scientific skills, supported by mathematics and computational thinking, as they learn science content. In third grade, students will develop more sophisticated skills in posing questions and predicting outcomes, planning and conducting simple investigations, collecting and analyzing data, constructing explanations, and communicating information about the natural world. Students begin to use the engineering design process to apply their scientific knowledge to solve problems.

Scientific and Engineering Practices

- 3.1 The student will demonstrate an understanding of scientific and engineering practices by
 - a) asking questions and defining problems
 - ask questions that can be investigated and predict reasonable outcomes
 - ask questions about what would happen if a variable is changed
 - define a simple design problem that can be solved through the development of an object, tool, process, or system
 - b) planning and carrying out investigations
 - with guidance, plan and conduct investigations
 - use appropriate methods and/or tools for collecting data
 - estimate length, mass, volume, and temperature
 - measure length, mass, volume, and temperature in metric and U.S. Customary units using proper tools
 - measure elapsed time
 - use tools and/or materials to design and/or build a device that solves a specific problem
 - c) interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating data
 - organize and represent data in pictographs or bar graphs
 - read, interpret, and analyze data represented in pictographs and bar graphs
 - analyze data from tests of an object or tool to determine if it works as intended
 - d) constructing and critiquing conclusions and explanations
 - use evidence (measurements, observations, patterns) to construct or support an explanation
 - generate and/or compare multiple solutions to a problem
 - describe how scientific ideas apply to design solutions
 - e) developing and using models

- use models to demonstrate simple phenomena and natural processes
 - develop a model (e.g., diagram or simple physical prototype) to illustrate a proposed object, tool, or process
- f) obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information
- read and comprehend reading-level appropriate texts and/or other reliable media
 - communicate scientific information, design ideas, and/or solutions with others

Force, Motion, and Energy

- 3.2 The student will investigate and understand that the direction and size of force affects the motion of an object. Key ideas include
- a) multiple forces may act on an object;
 - b) the net force on an object determines how an object moves;
 - c) simple machines increase or change the direction of a force; and
 - d) simple and compound machines have many applications.

Matter

- 3.3 The student will investigate and understand how materials interact with water. Key ideas include
- a) solids and liquids mix with water in different ways; and
 - b) many solids dissolve more easily in hot water than in cold water.

Living Systems and Processes

- 3.4 The student will investigate and understand that adaptations allow organisms to satisfy life needs and respond to the environment. Key ideas include
- a) populations may adapt over time;
 - b) adaptations may be behavioral or physical; and
 - c) fossils provide evidence about the types of organisms that lived long ago as well as the nature of their environments.
- 3.5 The student will investigate and understand that aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems support a diversity of organisms. Key ideas include
- a) ecosystems are made of living and nonliving components of the environment; and
 - b) relationships exist among organisms in an ecosystem.

Earth and Space Systems

- 3.6 The student will investigate and understand that soil is important in ecosystems. Key ideas include
- a) soil, with its different components, is important to organisms; and
 - b) soil provides support and nutrients necessary for plant growth.

- 3.7 The student will investigate and understand that there is a water cycle and water is important to life on Earth. Key ideas include
- a) there are many reservoirs of water on Earth;
 - b) the energy from the sun drives the water cycle; and
 - c) the water cycle involves specific processes.

Earth Resources

- 3.8 The student will investigate and understand that natural events and humans influence ecosystems. Key ideas include
- a) human activity affects the quality of air, water, and habitats;
 - b) water is limited and needs to be conserved;
 - c) fire, flood, disease, and erosion affect ecosystems; and
 - d) soil is a natural resource and should be conserved.