Iowa Core – Davenport Schools
Priority Essential Concepts and Skills for Earth and Space Science

We believe that the scientifically literate person is one who is aware that science, mathematics, and technology are interdependent human enterprises with strengths and limitations; understands key concepts and principles of science; is familiar with the natural world and recognizes both its diversity and unity; and uses scientific knowledge and scientific ways of thinking for individual and social purposes.

Science for All Americans, 1990

Introduction

The need for scientific literacy in today's increasingly technological world, for fundamental reforms in how science is taught, and for well-validated models that districts might emulate are by now well-known and documented. Expressions of concern from business leaders, scientists, and educators have led to national, state, and local initiatives. The Iowa Core Curriculum rose from those concerns. It has been a two-decade process in which the Department of Education initiated conversations and produced a body of work that laid the groundwork for this effort. Each of those early efforts led us closer to the design that would produce the clearest picture and become the most useful. This committee used both national and state level documents in this process. The final standards are drawn from the respected work of the National Research Council's (NRC) National Science Education Standards (NSES). The Iowa Core Curriculum is a common set of expectations designed to clarify and raise expectations for all students. It is a tool for Iowa educators to use to assure that essential subject matter is being taught and essential knowledge and skills are being learned.

As the amount of scientific knowledge expands, the need for ALL students to have a deep understanding of essential concepts increases. Technological advances have made information more readily available and decreased the need to memorize vocabulary and formulas. The scientific community agrees that we should teach fewer concepts at greater depth. The Iowa Core Curriculum of essential concepts and abilities in Science is a rich, yet manageable, set that will give each district a comprehensive model to evaluate local curricula. It moves beyond, as stated in the research report, Taking Science to School (National Research Council, The National Academies. Washington, D.C. 2007) "a focus on the dichotomy between either content knowledge or process skills because content and process are inextricably linked in science. Students who are proficient in science:

1. Know, use, and interpret scientific explanations of the natural world;
2. Generate and evaluate scientific evidence and explanations;
3. Understand the nature and development of scientific knowledge; and
4. Participate productively in scientific practices and discourse.

These strands of proficiency represent learning goals for students as well as a broad framework for curriculum design. They address the knowledge and reasoning skills that students must acquire to be proficient in science and, ultimately, able to participate in society as educated citizens."

High School Earth and Space Science

The Iowa Core Curriculum for Science reflects the belief that ALL students should experience science through a curriculum that is rigorous, relevant, global in its perspective, collaborative in nature, and connected by strong visible links to other areas of study. This document follows the format and content of NSES in which there are eight categories of standards. Four of the categories — Science as Inquiry, Physical Science, Earth and Space Science, and Life Science — are content specific, while the remaining categories — Science and Technology, Science in Personal and Social Perspectives, and the History and Nature of Science — address the application of knowledge. These remaining standards sets call for students to develop abilities to identify and state a problem, design, implement and evaluate a solution, and they complement the abilities developed in the Science as Inquiry Standards. They also help students develop decision-making skills and understand that science reflects its history and is an ongoing, changing enterprise. As such, these standards should be integrated throughout the four content specific categories stated above. These sets include the following at the 9 – 12 level: Science and Technology — abilities of technological design, and understanding about science and technology; Science in Personal and Social Perspectives — personal and community health, population growth, natural resources, environmental quality, natural and human-induced hazards, and science and technology in local, national, and global changes; History and Nature of Science — science as a human endeavor, nature of scientific knowledge, and historical perspectives (see appendix). Science as Inquiry and the

application standards from the NSES are integrated into the knowledge base by design. The content category of Unifying Concepts and Processes complements the other standards. The concepts and procedures in this category provide students with productive and insightful ways of thinking about and integrating basic ideas that explain the natural and designed world (see appendix for details). These concepts and processes include:

- Systems, order, and organization
- Evidence, models, and explanation
- Constancy, change, and measurement
- Evolution and equilibrium
- Form and function

Science is more than a body of knowledge. It is a way of thinking and a way of investigating. Students must have the opportunity to examine the impact science has had, and will continue to have, on the environment and society. These opportunities are the focus of the integrated standards.

The Iowa Core Curriculum for Science emphasizes student inquiry. The depth of understanding required of our students is not possible with lectures, readings, cookbook labs, and plug-and-chug problem solving. Students must be actively investigating: designing experiments, observing, questioning, exploring, making and testing hypotheses, making and comparing predictions, evaluating data, and communicating and defending conclusions. A district's science curriculum cannot align to the Iowa Core Curriculum for Science without including inquiry as a guaranteed and viable, testable component in every science course. The science *instruction should be engaging and relevant for the students. Strong connections between the lessons and the students' daily lives must be made. This core curriculum reflects high standards of science achievement for ALL students and not just those who have traditionally succeeded in science classes.*

The challenge is to create an educational system that connects students to the scientific world. The broad range of understandings and skills possessed by students when they enter 9th grade will require a system that is clearly articulated and masterfully implemented from kindergarten through grade 12. Teachers will need support and time to prepare for this challenge. This is a first bold step toward a vision of scientific literacy for all.

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Science as Inquiry

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Identify questions and concepts that guide scientific investigations.***
Students formulate a testable hypothesis and demonstrate the logical connections between the scientific concepts guiding a hypothesis and the design of an experiment. They should demonstrate appropriate procedures, a knowledge base, and conceptual understanding of scientific investigations. The key is that the student demonstrates knowledge of the scientific concepts through the investigation.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Design and conduct a scientific investigation.***
Designing and conducting a scientific investigation requires introduction to the major concepts in the area being investigated, proper equipment, safety precautions, assistance with methodological problems, recommendations for use of technologies, clarification of ideas that guide the inquiry, and scientific knowledge obtained from sources other than the actual investigation. The investigation may also require student clarification of the question, method, controls, and variables; student organization and display of data; student revision of methods and explanations; and a public presentation of the results with a critical response from peers. Regardless of the scientific investigation performed, students must use evidence, apply logic, and construct an argument for their proposed explanations.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Uses technology and mathematics to improve investigations and communications.***
A variety of technologies, such as hand tools, measuring instruments, and calculators should be an integral component of scientific investigations. The use of computers for the collection, analysis, and display of data is also a part of this standard. Mathematics plays an essential role in all aspects of an inquiry investigation. For example, measurement is used for posing questions, formulas are used for developing explanations, and charts and graphs are used for communicating results.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Formulates and revises scientific explanations and models using logic and evidence.***
Student inquiries culminate in formulating an explanation or model. Models should be physical, conceptual, and mathematical. In the process of answering the questions, the students engage in discussions and arguments that result in the revision of their explanations. These discussions should be based on scientific knowledge, the use of logic, and evidence from their investigation.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Think critically and logically to make the relationships between evidence and explanations.***
Thinking critically about evidence includes deciding what evidence should be used and accounting for anomalous data. Specifically, students review data from a simple experiment, summarize the data, and form a logical argument about the cause-and-effect relationships in the experiment.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Recognize and analyze alternative explanations and predictions.***
This aspect of the standard emphasizes the critical abilities of analyzing an argument by reviewing current scientific understanding, weighing the evidence, and examining the logic so as to decide which explanations and models are best. In other words, although there may be several plausible explanations, they do not all have equal weight. Students use scientific criteria to find the preferred explanations.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Communicate and defend scientific procedures and explanations.***
Students in school science programs develop the abilities associated with accurate and effective communication. These include writing and following procedures, expressing concepts, reviewing information, summarizing data, using language appropriately, developing diagrams and charts, explaining statistical analysis, speaking clearly and logically, constructing a reasoned argument, and responding appropriately to critical comments.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Use mathematics in all aspects of scientific inquiry.***
Mathematics is essential to asking and answering questions about the natural world. Mathematics can be used to ask questions; to gather, organize, and present data; and to structure convincing explanations.

Earth and Space

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Understand and apply knowledge of energy in the earth system.***

Principles that underlie the concept and/or skill include but are not limited to:

- Internal sources of energy
- External sources of energy
- Plate tectonics
- Energy transfer in the atmosphere and ocean

Earth systems have internal and external sources of energy, both of which create heat. The sun is the major external source of energy. Two primary sources of internal energy are the decay of radioactive isotopes and the gravitational energy from the earth's original formation.

The outward transfer of Earth's internal heat drives convection circulation in the mantle that propels the plates comprising the earth's surface across the face of the globe.

Heating of the earth's surface and atmosphere by the sun drives convection within the atmosphere and oceans, producing winds and ocean currents.

Global climate is determined by energy transfer from the sun at and near the earth's surface. This energy transfer is influenced by dynamic processes such as cloud cover and the earth's rotation, and static conditions such as the position of mountain ranges and oceans.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Understand and apply knowledge of Geochemical cycles.***

Principles that underlie the concept and/or skill include but are not limited to:

- Elements/atoms within Earth reservoirs: Solid Earth, oceans, atmosphere, and organisms
- Movement of elements/atoms between reservoirs

The earth is a system containing essentially a fixed amount of each stable chemical atom or element. Each element can exist in several different chemical reservoirs. Each element on Earth moves among reservoirs in the solid Earth, oceans, atmosphere, and organisms as part of geochemical cycles.

Movement of matter between reservoirs is driven by the earth's internal and external sources of energy. These movements are often accompanied by a change in the physical and chemical properties of the matter. Carbon, for example, occurs in carbonate rocks such as limestone, in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide gas, in water as dissolved carbon dioxide, and in all organisms as complex molecules that control the chemistry of life.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Understand and apply knowledge of origin and evolution of the earth system.***

Principles that underlie the concept and/or skill include but are not limited to:

- Formation of solar system
- Geologic time
- Interactions among hydrosphere, lithosphere and atmosphere
- Life: origin, evolution, and effect on Earth systems

The sun, the earth, and the rest of the solar system formed from a nebular cloud of dust and gas 10 to 15 billion years ago. The early Earth was very different from the planet on which we live today.

Geologic time can be estimated by observing rock sequences and using fossils to correlate the sequences at various locations. Current methods for measuring geologic time include using the known decay rates of radioactive isotopes present in rocks to measure the time since the rock was formed.

Interactions among the solid Earth, the oceans, the atmosphere, and organisms have resulted in the ongoing evolution of the earth system. We can observe some changes such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions on a human time scale, but many processes such as mountain building and plate movements take place over hundreds of millions of years.

Evidence for one-celled forms of life—the microbes—extends back more than 3.5 billion years. The evolution of life caused dramatic changes in the composition of the earth's atmosphere, which did not originally contain oxygen.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: ***Understand and apply knowledge of origin and evolution of the Universe.***

Principles that underlie the concept and/or skill include but are not limited to:

- Age and origin of the universe
- Universe and galaxies
- Star formation

The origin of the universe remains one of the greatest questions in science. The "big bang" theory places the origin between 10 and 20 billion years ago, when the universe began in a hot dense state: According to this theory, the universe has been expanding ever since.

Early in the history of the universe, matter—primarily the light atoms hydrogen and helium — clumped together through gravitational attraction to form countless trillions of stars. Billions of galaxies, each of which is a gravitationally bound cluster of billions of stars, now form most of the visible mass in the universe.

Stars produce energy from nuclear reactions, primarily the fusion of hydrogen to form helium. These and other processes in stars have led to the formation of all the other elements.