

High School Life Sciences

Students in high school develop understanding of key concepts that will help them make sense of life science. The ideas are built upon students' science understanding of disciplinary core ideas, science and engineering practices, and crosscutting concepts from earlier grades. There are four life science disciplinary core ideas in high school: 1) *From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes*, 2) *Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics*, 3) *Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits*, 4) *Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity*. The performance expectations for high school life science blend core ideas with scientific and engineering practices and crosscutting concepts to support students in developing useable knowledge that can be applied across the science disciplines. While the performance expectations in high school life science couple particular practices with specific disciplinary core ideas, instructional decisions should include use of many practices underlying the performance expectations.

The performance expectations in **LS1: *From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes*** help students formulate an answer to the question, "How do organisms live and grow?" The LS1 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* is presented as three sub-ideas: Structure and Function, Growth and Development of Organisms, and Organization for Matter and Energy Flow in Organisms. In these performance expectations, students demonstrate that they can use investigations and gather evidence to support explanations of cell function and reproduction. They understand the role of proteins as essential to the work of the cell and living systems. Students can use models to explain photosynthesis, respiration, and the cycling of matter and flow of energy in living organisms. The cellular processes can be used as a model for understanding of the hierarchical organization of organism. Crosscutting concepts of matter and energy, structure and function, and systems and system models provide students with insights to the structures and processes of organisms.

The performance expectations in **LS2: *Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics*** help students formulate an answer to the question, "How and why do organisms interact with their environment, and what are the effects of these interactions?" The LS2 Disciplinary Core Idea includes four sub-ideas: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems, Cycles of Matter and Energy Transfer in Ecosystems, Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience, and Social Interactions and Group Behavior. High school students can use mathematical reasoning to demonstrate understanding of fundamental concepts of carrying capacity, factors affecting biodiversity and populations, and the cycling of matter and flow of energy among organisms in an ecosystem. These mathematical models provide support of students' conceptual understanding of systems and their ability to develop design solutions for reducing the impact of human activities on the environment and maintaining biodiversity. Crosscutting concepts of systems and system models play a central role in students' understanding of science and engineering practices and core ideas of ecosystems.

The performance expectations in **LS3: *Heredity: Inheritance and Variation of Traits*** help students formulate answers to the questions: "How are characteristics of one generation passed to the next? How can individuals of the same species and even siblings have different characteristics?" The LS3 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* includes two sub-ideas: Inheritance of Traits, and Variation of Traits. Students are able to ask questions, make and defend a claim, and use concepts of probability to explain the genetic variation in a



population. Students demonstrate understanding of why individuals of the same species vary in how they look, function, and behave. Students can explain the mechanisms of genetic inheritance and describe the environmental and genetic causes of gene mutation and the alteration of gene expression. Crosscutting concepts of patterns and cause and effect are called out as organizing concepts for these core ideas.

The performance expectations in **LS4: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity** help students formulate an answer to the question, "What evidence shows that different species are related? The LS4 Disciplinary Core Idea involves four sub-ideas: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity, Natural Selection, Adaptation, and Biodiversity and Humans. Students can construct explanations for the processes of natural selection and evolution and communicate how multiple lines of evidence support these explanations. Students can evaluate evidence of the conditions that may result in new species and understand the role of genetic variation in natural selection. Additionally, students can apply concepts of probability to explain trends in populations as those trends relate to advantageous heritable traits in a specific environment. The crosscutting concepts of cause and effect and systems and system models play an important role in students' understanding of the evolution of life on Earth.