

Middle School Physical Science

Students in middle school continue to develop understanding of four core ideas in the physical sciences. The middle school performance expectations in the Physical Sciences build on the K – 5 ideas and capabilities to allow learners to explain phenomena central to the physical sciences but also to the life sciences and earth and space science. The performance expectations in physical science blend the core ideas with scientific and engineering practices and crosscutting concepts to support students in developing useable knowledge to explain real world phenomena in the physical, biological, and earth and space sciences. In the physical sciences, performance expectations at the middle school level focus on students developing understanding of several scientific practices. These include developing and using models, planning and conducting investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, using mathematical and computational thinking, and constructing explanations; and to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas. Students are also expected to demonstrate understanding of several of engineering practices including design and evaluation.

The performance expectations in **PS1: Matter and its Interactions** help students to formulate an answer to the question, “How do atomic and molecular interactions explain the properties of matter that we see and feel?” by building understanding of what occurs at the atomic and molecular scale. In middle school, the PS1 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* is broken down into two sub-ideas: the structure and properties of matter, and chemical reactions. By the end of middle school, students will be able to apply understanding that pure substances have characteristic physical and chemical properties and are made from a single type of atom or molecule. They will be able to provide molecular level accounts to explain states of matters and changes between states, that chemical reactions involve regrouping of atoms to form new substances, and that atoms rearrange during chemical reactions. Students are also able to apply an understanding of the design and the process of optimization in engineering to chemical reaction systems. The crosscutting concepts of patterns; cause and effect; scale, proportion and quantity; energy and matter; structure and function; interdependence of science, engineering, and technology; and influence of science, engineering and technology on society and the natural world are called out as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. In the PS1 performance expectations, students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in developing and using models, analyzing and interpreting data, designing solutions, and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information. Students use these scientific and engineering practices to demonstrate understanding of the disciplinary core ideas.

The performance expectations in **PS2: Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions** focuses on helping students understand ideas related to why some objects will keep moving, why objects fall to the ground and why some materials are attracted to each other while others are not. Students answer the question, “How can one describe physical interactions between objects and within systems of objects?” At the middle school level, the PS2 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* is broken down into two sub-ideas: Forces and Motion and Types of interactions. By the end of middle school, students will be able to apply Newton’s Third Law of Motion to relate forces to explain the motion of objects. Students also apply ideas about gravitational, electrical, and magnetic forces to explain a variety of phenomena including beginning ideas about why some materials attract each other while others repel. In particular, students will develop understanding that gravitational interactions are always attractive but that



electrical and magnetic forces can be both attractive and negative. Students also develop ideas that objects can exert forces on each other even though the objects are not in contact, through fields. Students are also able to apply an engineering practice and concept to solve a problem caused when objects collide. The crosscutting concepts of cause and effect; system and system models; stability and change; and the influence of science, engineering, and technology on society and the natural world serve as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. In the PS2 performance expectations, students are expected to demonstrate proficiency in asking questions, planning and carrying out investigations, and designing solutions, and engaging in argument; and to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas.

The performance expectations in **PS3: Energy** help students formulate an answer to the question, "How can energy be transferred from one object or system to another?" At the middle school level, the PS3 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* is broken down into four sub-core ideas: Definitions of Energy, Conservation of Energy and Energy Transfer, the Relationship between Energy and Forces, and Energy in Chemical Process and Everyday Life. Students develop their understanding of important qualitative ideas about energy including that the interactions of objects can be explained and predicted using the concept of transfer of energy from one object or system of objects to another, and the total change of energy in any system is always equal to the total energy transferred into or out of the system. Students understand that objects that are moving have kinetic energy and that objects may also contain stored (potential) energy, depending on their relative positions. Students will also come to know the difference between energy and temperature, and begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between force and energy. Students are also able to apply an understanding of design to the process of energy transfer. The crosscutting concepts of scale, proportion, and quantity; systems and system models; and energy are called out as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. The performance expectations in PS3 expect students to demonstrate proficiency in developing and using models, planning investigations, analyzing and interpreting data, and designing solutions, and engaging in argument from evidence; and to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas in PS3.

The performance expectations in **PS4: Waves and Their Applications in Technologies for Information Transfer** help students formulate an answer to the question, "What are the characteristic properties of waves and how can they be used?" At the middle school level, the PS4 Disciplinary Core Idea from the *NRC Framework* is broken down into Wave Properties, Electromagnetic Radiation, and Information Technologies and Instrumentation. Students are able to describe and predict characteristic properties and behaviors of waves when the waves interact with matter. Students can apply an understanding of waves as a means to send digital information. The crosscutting concepts of patterns and structure and function are used as organizing concepts for these disciplinary core ideas. The performance expectations in PS4 focus on students demonstrating proficiency in developing and using models, using mathematical thinking, and obtaining, evaluating and communicating information; and to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas.