Introduction

The 2020–21 school year presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges due to the disruption to instruction in spring 2020 as well as the uncertainty as the school year unfolds. Educators know that every school year there are students who require support in addressing unfinished learning from prior grades; a challenge that will be felt more prominently in the 2020–21 school year. It is vitally important that educators are supported to make deliberate instructional choices that allow all students to effectively engage with grade-level work.

The most effective and equitable way to support students in their learning is to ensure that the vast majority of time is spent engaging with grade-level content and accelerating as needed. It is entirely possible to hold high expectations for all students while addressing unfinished learning in the context of grade-level work. Since time is a scarce commodity in classrooms — made more limited by anticipated closures and remote or hybrid learning models in the fall of 2020 — strategic instructional choices about which content to prioritize must be made.\(^1\)

Assessing students at the start of the year will identify learning gaps and provide data to inform instruction. Diagnostic Assessments determine student strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills. Administering diagnostic assessments permits the instructor to intervene at the point where students begin to struggle or when they are performing below grade level expectations (running record, Classroom Diagnostic Tests [CDT]). Diagnostic assessments allow teachers to adjust the curriculum to meet the unique needs of all students. While some concepts have greater emphasis in a particular year, all standards deserve a defined level of instruction. Neglecting concepts may result in learning gaps in student skill and understanding and may leave students unprepared for the challenges of a later grade.

This guidance document is designed to identify and define areas of high-level focus in Science instruction supported by key PA Academic Standards. Note that while all standards deserve a defined level of instruction, neglecting key concepts may result in learning gaps in student skill and understanding and may leave students unprepared for the challenges of a later grade. Not all content in a given grade is emphasized equally in the standards. Some focus areas require greater emphasis then others based on the depth of the ideas, the time taken to master, and/or their importance to the future science grade levels. More time in these areas is also necessary for students to meet the Standards for Inquiry and Design and Unifying Themes.

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\(^1\) Adapted from 2020–21 Priority Instructional Content in English Language Arts/literacy and Mathematics, Student Achievement Partners/Achieve the Core. May 2020
## GRADE 3 FOCUS OF INSTRUCTION (2020-2021)

This guidance document is designed to identify and define areas of high-level focus in science instruction supported by key PA Academic Standards. Note that while all standards deserve a defined level of instruction, neglecting key concepts may result in learning gaps in skill and understanding and may leave students unprepared for the challenges of later grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Areas of Instruction</th>
<th>PA Academic Standards</th>
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| **Life Science**          | 3.1.4.B Know models as useful simplifications of objects or processes.  
                            | 3.2.4.A Identify and use the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.  
                            | 3.3.4.A Know the similarities and differences of living things.  
                            | 3.3.4.C Know that characteristics are inherited and, thus, offspring closely resemble their parents.  
                            | 3.3.4.D Identify changes in living things over time.  
                            | 3.5.4.A Know basic landforms and earth history.  
                            | 3.1.4.C Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.  
                            | 3.1.4.D Know that scale is an important attribute of natural and human made objects, events and phenomena.  
                            | 3.2.4.C Know that scale is an important attribute of natural and human made objects, events and phenomena.  
                            | 3.4.4.A Know that scale is an important attribute of natural and human made objects, events and phenomena.  
                            | 3.1.4.E Recognize change in natural and physical systems.  
                            | 3.5.4.C Know basic weather elements.  
                            | 3.1.4.C Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.  |
| **Physical Science**       | 3.1.4.B Know models as useful simplifications of objects or processes.  
                            | 3.2.4.A Identify and use the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.  
                            | 3.3.4.A Know the similarities and differences of living things.  
                            | 3.3.4.C Know that characteristics are inherited and, thus, offspring closely resemble their parents.  
                            | 3.3.4.D Identify changes in living things over time.  
                            | 3.5.4.A Know basic landforms and earth history.  
                            | 3.1.4.C Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.  
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| **Earth and Space Science**| 3.1.4.B Know models as useful simplifications of objects or processes.  
                            | 3.2.4.A Identify and use the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.  
                            | 3.3.4.A Know the similarities and differences of living things.  
                            | 3.3.4.C Know that characteristics are inherited and, thus, offspring closely resemble their parents.  
                            | 3.3.4.D Identify changes in living things over time.  
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