



MY CHILD'S LEARNING:

a Parent's Guide to the Iowa Core



This guide provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of 3rd grade as directed by the Iowa Core, our statewide academic standards. The guide focuses on key concepts and skills in mathematics, literacy, science, social studies and 21st Century skills. In addition, the Iowa Core builds a strong foundation for success in other subjects he or she studies throughout the school year. If your child meets the expectations outlined in the Iowa Core, he or she will be well prepared for 4th grade.

Why are Academic Standards Important?

Academic standards are important because they help ensure that all students, no matter where they live or what school they attend, are prepared for success in college and the workforce. They help set clear and consistent expectations for what students should know and be able to do from kindergarten through 12th grade. Standards are a set of goals, not a curriculum, so decisions about teaching remain with local schools.

High standards help teachers and parents work together to ensure students succeed. They guide parents and teachers to know when students need extra assistance or when they need more of a challenge in the classroom. They also help your child develop critical-thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.



Some content adapted from the National PTA's *Parent's Guide to Student Success*.

How are the standards organized?

Some of the Iowa Core standards are arranged grade-by-grade, while others are grouped into a span of grade levels. In all cases, the standards set appropriate expectations for what students need to learn, but not how to teach.

- Literacy and mathematics: These standards are arranged grade-by-grade for kindergarten through 8th grade. For high school, literacy standards are arranged by grade span (9-10 and 11-12) and math standards are arranged by subject, such as algebra and geometry.
- Science, social studies, and 21st century skills: These standards are arranged in grade spans of K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.



Mathematics

The most important topics are multiplication, division and fractions, which are the building blocks for many skills, such as percentages, that students will learn in later grades. Students also need to master these topics to be ready for algebra and advanced math, so it is essential to get a good start.

Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Multiply and divide up to 10×10 , and know the times tables from memory.
- Solve word problems by using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.
- Begin to multiply numbers that have more than one digit (e.g., multiply 9×80).
- Understand fractions and how they relate to the familiar system of whole numbers (e.g., recognize that the fraction $\frac{1}{2}$ lies on the number line between the whole numbers 0 and 1; recognize that $\frac{3}{1}$ and 3 are the same number).
- Develop reasoning in regard to shapes and their attributes (e.g., shapes that share an attribute, such as those with four sides, fit into a category called quadrilaterals).
- Find perimeter and area of shapes and relate area to multiplication (e.g., why is the number of square feet for a 9-foot-by-7-foot room given by the product 9×7).

How to Help Your Child at Home:

Look for "word problems" in real life. Some 3rd grade examples might include:

- Notice those everyday occasions when you use times tables, such as determining how many days there are in four weeks. Ask your child for the answer.
- Involve your child when you use division to "work backward" in the times tables. For example, determine how many candies each child will get if 36 candies are shared equally among nine children at a party, or determine how many six-inch lengths can be cut from a string 18 inches long.

English Language Arts & Literacy

This is a pivotal year for your child as he or she learns to read with fluency and confidence. By practicing with learning-to-read strategies, your child will reliably be able to make sense of multisyllable words in books. He or she will come to appreciate that words have meanings that are not literal (e.g., a piece of cake) and have relationships to other words (e.g., company and companion). Your child will be able to read increasingly challenging stories and books and build knowledge about the world around him or her. By the end of the year, students will write clear sentences and paragraphs about a range of topics by drawing on an expanded vocabulary.

Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Compare the most important points and key details presented in two books about the same topic.
- Independently conduct short research projects that build knowledge about various topics.
- Ask and answer questions about information he or she hears from a speaker or while participating in classroom discussions; and offer appropriate elaboration and details that build on what others have said.
- Read stories and poems aloud fluently, without pausing to figure out what each word means.
- Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words, such as "something's fishy" and "cold shoulder."
- Spell correctly and consult a dictionary to clarify the meanings of words.

How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Make reading for fun a part of your child's daily routine. Set aside quiet time, with no phones, computers, or other distractions, when your child can read for pleasure such books as *Amos & Boris* by William Steig or *The Fire Cat* by Esther Averill.
- Encourage your child to find a picture from a newspaper or magazine, cut it out, paste it on paper, and write a story about it.
- Start a family vocabulary box or jar. Have everyone write down new words they discover, add them to the box, and use the words in conversation.



Science (3-5)

Your child will develop questioning skills and the ability to reason. As his or her world expands, so will the complexity of your child's questions. He or she will be able to design and conduct simple experiments to answer questions by carrying out tests, analyzing results and communicating findings.

Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Generate questions that can be answered through scientific investigations; experiment with the different kinds of investigations scientists use; and use the evidence to develop reasonable explanations.
- Identify the properties of substances, relate forces to an object's motion, and begin to investigate sound, light, electricity, magnetism and heat.
- Develop an understanding of the relationships between organisms and their environment; consider his or her own role in environmental stewardship; begin to understand basic human body systems; and recognize personal health and wellness issues.
- Compare weather and weather patterns to explain phenomenon in terms of processes and changes that occur on or in the Earth's land, oceans and atmosphere; assess properties, movements and locations of objects in the solar system; and consider fossils as evidence of past life on Earth.

How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Encourage finding answers to questions through research and experimentation.
- Provide ample time to explore parks and green spaces.
- Encourage and help design, create and build a fort, a raft, a playhouse, etc.
- Utilize programs offered by your county nature center and visit your community's hiking, biking, and cross-country trails.
- Go to the following website: <http://myamericanfarm.org>.

Social Studies (3-5)

Your child will learn about Iowa and the United States through the lens of history, civics, economics, geography and the behavioral sciences. He or she will begin to examine and solve real-world issues by acting as an engaged citizen.

Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Compare individual cultural traits to those of other diverse groups.
- Determine the economic tradeoff of purchasing goods and services based upon economic wants and needs.
- Use geographic tools to analyze the relationship between human and physical geography.
- Investigate historical patterns by focusing on the cause and effect of events within the history of Iowa and the United States.
- Explore the meaning of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Use the ideals within them to solve a real-world scenario through the creation of a civic action plan.

How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Read with your child every day. Seek out social studies-related books, both fiction and non-fiction. Check your local library or the National Council for the Social Studies Notable Trade Book List at <http://www.socialstudies.org/notable>.
- Visit museums and cultural institutions and discuss the history of Iowa and its role within the United States.
- Discuss financial responsibility and aspects of money such as saving, spending, budgeting, etc.
- Talk about and explore local and/or national geographical routes, directions, and landmarks using various geographic tools such as paper maps, Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and electronic tools.
- Identify local laws and rules and discuss their impact on our lives.



21st Century Skills (3-5)

Your child will continue to practice fitness skills and begin to understand the long-term benefits of being physically active. Students will learn to accept constructive criticism, strive to complete high-quality work and collaborate with classmates. They will explore concepts related to good financial decision-making and responsible citizenship.

Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Use technology (e.g. pedometers, Wii physical activity games) to improve fitness and have fun.
- Identify opportunities for leadership and service in the classroom, school, state and nation.
- Apply prior knowledge of technology to learning how to use new technologies/software.
- Identify and organize materials needed for a task.
- Explain the difference between short-term and long-term financial goals and why it is important to have both.

How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Visit <http://KidsHealthline.com> for videos, games and activities.
- Read with your child from books with 21st Century skills content. Examples: *Jobs People Do* series by DK publishing; *The Marvels of Money for Kids* series by Paul Nourigat.
- Help your child select physical activities to keep moving and have fun.
- Show your child how to appropriately use technology to find games, activities and information.



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