



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 5th 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 6th 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

This is the final year that focuses on numbers, operations and fractions. Your child must have an understanding of fractions because even simple equations cannot be solved without them. Attention on using whole numbers to understand computation comes mostly to a close this year, and multiplying and dividing fractions becomes a major focus.

### Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators (e.g.,  $2\frac{1}{4} - 1\frac{1}{3}$ ), and solve word problems of this kind.
- Multiply fractions, divide fractions in limited cases and solve related word problems (e.g., find the area of a rectangle with fractional side lengths; determine how many  $\frac{1}{3}$ -cup servings are in 2 cups of raisins; determine the size of a share if 9 people share a 50-pound sack of rice equally, or if 3 people share  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound of chocolate equally).
- Generalize the place-value system to include decimals, and calculate with decimals to the hundredths place (two places after the decimal).
- Multiply whole numbers efficiently ( $1,638 \times 753$ ), and divide whole numbers in simple cases (6,971 by 63).
- Understand the concept of volume and solve word problems that involve volume.
- Graph points in the coordinate plane (two dimensions).

### How to Help Your Child at Home:

Look for "word problems" in real life. Some 5th grade examples might include:

- Do calculations with decimals (for example, when balancing a checkbook).
- Multiply with fractions (for example, if you used about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup measure of vegetable stock, how much stock did you use? About how much is left?).
- Use the length, width, and depth of a garden plot to determine how many bags of garden soil to buy.

## English Language Arts & Literacy

Your child will read from a wide and deep range of high-quality, increasingly challenging fiction and nonfiction materials that derive from diverse cultures and time periods. A key to his or her continued success will be to build knowledge about subjects through research projects and respond analytically to literary and informational sources. Your child will write stories or essays that are several paragraphs long. He or she also will gain control over many conventions of grammar, usage and punctuation.

### Examples of Your Child's Work at School:

- Identify and judge evidence that supports particular ideas in an author's argument to change a reader's point of view.
- Write opinions that offer reasoned arguments and provide facts and examples that are logically grouped to support the writer's point of view.
- Write stories, real or imaginary, that unfold naturally and develop the plot with dialogue, description and effective pacing of the action.
- Come to classroom discussions prepared, and then participate fully and engage thoughtfully with others (e.g., contribute accurate, relevant information; elaborate on the remarks of others; synthesize ideas).
- Expand, combine and reduce sentences to improve meaning, interest and style of writing.
- Produce writing on the computer.

### How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Invite your child to read his or her writing out loud to other family members. Ask questions about your child's word choices and ideas.
- Discuss your family stories and history. Encourage your child to ask relatives questions about their lives. Put the information together in an album or brainstorm different ways to tell family tales, such as poems or short stories.
- Go to a play or musical with your child. Discuss ways actors bring the words to life.



## 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.



[www.iowacore.gov](http://www.iowacore.gov)