



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 kindergarten 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 1st 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, mathematics, and science: 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 and science standards are arranged by discipline within the content area.
- Social studies and 21st century skills: These standards are arranged in grade spans of K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.



## Mathematics

Children arrive in kindergarten with widely varying levels of knowledge in math. By the end of the year, your child must have some important foundations in place. This includes the ability to count objects, add and subtract small numbers, and use addition and subtraction to solve word problems.

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

- Count objects to tell how many there are.
- Act out, using objects, addition and subtraction word problems and/or draw diagrams to represent them.
- Add with a sum of 10 or less; subtract from 10 or less; and solve addition and subtraction word problems.
- Fluently add and subtract within 5 (e.g.,  $3 + 1$ ).
- Correctly name shapes regardless of orientation or size (e.g., a square oriented as a "diamond" is still a square).

### How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Play "write the next number." You write a number, and your child writes the next number.
- Ask your child questions that require counting up to 20 things. For example, ask, "How many books do you have about wild animals?"
- Ask your child questions that require comparing numbers. "Who is wearing more bracelets, you or your sister?" (Your child might use matching or counting to find the answer.)

## English Language Arts & Literacy

Your child will learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. He or she will practice rhyming, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words to prepare the child to read and spell correctly. Your child will begin to experiment with writing and will be encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing letters to share information, ideas and feelings.

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

- Name upper- and lower-case letters, match those letters with their sounds, and write them.
- Retell stories and talk about stories read to your child by using details from the text.
- Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to describe an event that includes the student's reaction to what happened.
- State an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My favorite book is...").
- Take part in classroom conversations and follow rules for discussions (e.g., listen to others and take turns when speaking).
- Learn to recognize, spell and properly use short grammatical words that hold language together (e.g., a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are).

### How to Help Your Child at Home:

- Read daily with your child from books such as *Are You My Mother?* by P.D. Eastman or *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss. Ask your child to explain his or her favorite parts of the story. Share your own ideas.
- Encourage your child to tell you about his or her day at school. Keep paper, markers, or crayons around the house for your child to write letters or words or to draw a picture about his or her day. Have your child describe the picture to you.
- Play word games like "I Spy," sing songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider," and make silly rhymes together.



## Science

Learners build on their early experiences of observing the world around them as they begin to formulate answers to questions such as “Where do animals live and why do they live there? What is the weather like today and how is it different from yesterday?” Kindergarten students will use their senses to make observations, ask and answer questions, develop models, and plan and conduct investigations. Students in kindergarten will identify patterns and cause and effect relationships as they explore the world around them.

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

- Ask and answer questions related to the natural world.
- Use observations to identify patterns and variations in local weather.
- Observe plants and animals, determine what all animals, including humans, need to survive and identify examples of how plants and animals meet their needs through interacting with or changing their environments.
- Experiment with pushing and pulling various objects and investigate the answer to “What happens if you push or pull an object harder?”

### How to Help Your Child at Home:

- As you go about your daily activities and during play, encourage your child to ask questions, make observations, and identify patterns.
- Encourage your child to play with a variety of safe objects/toys and to discover what happens when he/she pushes and pulls those objects.
- Keep track of local weather conditions, identify patterns, and discuss your family’s plan for staying safe in severe weather.
- Have your child help with taking care of a family pet or inside or outside plants and observe nature while out on walks or while visiting parks or zoos. Talk about what the pet and plant need to survive compared to what your child needs to survive.

## Social Studies (K-2)

Your child will learn what a community is through the ideals of responsible citizenship and his or her place in a community. Children will become detectives of history by comparing life in communities from long ago to today. Your child will discover how his or her individual traits may be the same or different from others.

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

- Construct class rules that embody fairness, leadership and responsibility while learning how to apply the ideals of citizenship.
- Compare and contrast life today to life in the past by using primary sources (artifacts, photographs and documents) and place them on a timeline.
- Use maps, globes and photos to analyze the geography of a community.
- Recognize that people have individual traits and can be alike and different in many ways.
- Evaluate the difference between needs and wants and make connections to the concept of goods and services.

### 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>.
- Look at family photos and discuss the history of your family.
- Establish and discuss family rules to promote responsibility and leadership at home.
- Point out and discuss notable landmarks in your community such as the library, hospital, grocery store, police station, museums, parks, etc.
- Visit local museums and cultural institutions and compare life today to life in the past.



## 21st Century Skills (K-2)

Your child will participate in activities that teach how good hygiene, healthy food choices and adequate rest help him or her feel good and be ready to learn. Students will learn how to use technology in all curricular areas to communicate and appropriately work with others. They will practice work habits and social skills that will help them become successful students. Students will receive real-world experiences through visits from community members and parents who represent various professions, and then participate in age-appropriate activities that are related to the visits.

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

- Compare positive and negative health and safety practices.
- Give examples of personal rights and responsibilities as members in a classroom.
- Use technology to illustrate and communicate ideas related to class projects.
- Follow steps or processes to complete increasingly complex tasks.
- Understand the concepts of spending and saving money and why both are important.

### 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)