3rd Grade Family Guide

What is the purpose of this family guide?

This guide was made to help families understand the Iowa Academic Standards and to show what students will learn by the end of third grade. It provides information about the key ideas and skills teachers will introduce in mathematics, English Language Arts/Reading and science. It also includes possible examples of what students will be asked to do in class, how to help your student at home, questions you can ask your student and questions families can ask the teacher.

This guide was also designed to help families understand how they can work with teachers to support the learning of their third grader. When teachers and families work together to help students master Iowa's Academic Standards, students can develop the skills they will need for success in school and life. If you have questions about this information or if your student needs extra help, please contact the teacher.

Why are Iowa's 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. The standards 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. They guide families and teachers to know when students need extra assistance or when they need more of a challenge in the classroom. They also help your student develop critical-thinking skills in preparation for college and career.

English/Language Arts

In grade 3, students start to read with greater fluency and accuracy as they build their confidence with text. Students will read a wider variety of literary and informational texts. Students will be taught to decode the multisyllabic words in books and use their meaning or word parts to figure out the word meaning. Students will be taught that not all word meanings are literal. Students will be introduced to cursive writing. By the end of Grade 3, students will be able to write clear sentences and paragraphs in various formats, including research. Students will use communication skills with others and present information orally.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

- Students will expand their decoding skills to include multisyllabic words.
- Students will read text carefully to find the supporting details for the main idea.
- Students will be asked to compare two texts on the same topic to determine which details are the same and which details are different.
- Students will expand their vocabulary through both word analysis skills and reading many text types and genres for information.
- Students will use the writing process to plan, draft, revise and edit their writing.
- Students will conduct a short research project to build knowledge on a topic.
- Students will use cursive writing.
- Students will collaborate and communicate to develop oral presentations.
- Students will ask and answer questions, building on the ideas of others while participating in a discussion.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Your student will learn how to read different books on the same topic and compare the books using specific events or details from the book to support their answer.
- Your student will read stories and poems aloud fluently, without pausing to figure out what each word is during the reading.
- Your student will determine how to decode multisyllabic words using a strategy.
- Your student will distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words, such as “something’s fishy” and “cold shoulder.”
- Your student will read a variety of texts to expand their vocabulary on a topic.
- Your student will write for a variety of purposes, including research.
- Your student will learn and use cursive writing.
- Your student will learn to effectively communicate with adults and peers in a way that moves conversations forward, offering appropriate elaboration and details to build on what others have said.

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Set aside quiet time for your student to read.
- Help your student find books to read based on an interest or a question they are trying to answer.
- Encourage your student to write for a variety of purposes.
- Play games with your student to increase their vocabulary, such as keeping track of how many times they can use a word of the day.
- Provide experiences for your student in which afterwards they can deepen their knowledge through reading and writing.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- How might you split that word into parts so that you can read it?
- How is the information from this book the same and different from the other book you read on this topic?
- How can you determine what that word means?
- What can you write about this topic?
- What would be a good question to ask about this topic?

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- Ask to see a sample of your student's work.
- Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better?
- Ask if your student is on track with their reading and writing skills?
- Ask how you can help your student improve or excel in this reading and writing?
- If you believe your student needs extra support, ask if there are resources that you can use at home.

Mathematics

Third grade is a pivotal year where students deepen their understanding of key mathematical concepts, transition to more abstract thinking and tackle new challenges like multiplication, division and fractions. This year emphasizes problem-solving, critical thinking and real-world applications. Your encouragement and involvement are essential in helping your student build confidence and enthusiasm for mathematics.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

- **Multiplication and Division:** Understanding and fluently multiplying and dividing within 100 and solving problems using arrays, groups and equations.
- **Fractions:** Representing and understanding fractions as numbers; comparing, ordering and identifying equivalent fractions.
- **Operations and Algebraic Thinking:** Solving multi-step word problems and understanding patterns and relationships in math.
- **Measurement and Data:** Measuring time, volume and mass and solving problems involving these concepts, interpreting and creating bar graphs and pictographs.
- **Geometry:** Identifying and classifying shapes based on their attributes; understanding area and perimeter concepts.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Building fluency with multiplication and division facts to solve complex problems.
- Exploring fractions and understanding how they relate to whole numbers.
- Learning to solve real-world math problems involving measurement and data.
- Developing a deeper understanding of area and perimeter through hands-on activities.
- Strengthening their ability to explain their reasoning and share their problem-solving strategies.

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Practice multiplication and division facts through games or daily tasks.
- Use everyday activities, like cooking or shopping, to introduce fractions and problem-solving.
- Engage your student in projects involving measurement, such as building or crafting.
- Play board games or puzzles that encourage strategic thinking and mathematical reasoning.
- Encourage your student to talk about their problem-solving process and praise their effort, not just their answers.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- What math strategies did you use today?
- Can you show me how you solved a multiplication or division problem?
- What do you know about fractions so far?
- Can you explain what area and perimeter mean?
- What kinds of graphs or charts have you worked on recently?

What questions can I ask my students' teacher?

- How is my student doing with multiplication and division facts?
- What are some activities I can do at home to reinforce fractions and problem-solving?
- Are there any tools or resources to help my student with geometry or measurement concepts?
- How can I support my student if they struggle with multi-step word problems?

Science

The Iowa Academic Standards for Science empower teachers to provide all students in third grade with engaging science instruction that emphasizes data analysis and interpretation, critical thinking, problem solving and interdisciplinary connections—all while maintaining high expectations for academic achievement.

The science standards work in harmony with English/Language Arts and mathematics standards, allowing classroom instruction to better reflect real-world problem-solving, which often draws on multiple disciplines. Additionally, these standards aim to ensure all students have access to an equitable, high-quality science education.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

The Iowa Academic Standards for Science incorporate the most current research and developments in modern science. To prepare students to think critically, analyze information and solve complex problems, the standards are structured to allow students—starting in elementary school and continuing through high school—to build on prior knowledge and skills. Key concepts are revisited and deepened over time, helping students strengthen their understanding of connections across scientific disciplines. Parents should be aware that while some content may seem familiar, the way it is taught may differ from their own school experience.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- What happens to the motion of an object when balanced or unbalanced forces are applied? How can we measure, describe and predict object movement?
- Why do some animals form groups to help them survive? What are some traits that plants and animals inherit from their parents?
- How do environmental factors, such as climate, habitat changes, or food availability, impact the traits of plants and animals in a specific habitat? Why do some, but not all organisms thrive in a habitat?
- What are the typical weather conditions during each season and how do they affect our daily lives currently and in the future?

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Encourage your student to begin to make sense of the world around them by asking questions and making observations. Ask them what they notice and what they wonder about the world around them.
- Extend classroom experiences at home by encouraging your student to explore, using their own language to describe lived experiences.
- Use the information on these pages to ask your student's teacher meaningful, informed questions.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

Each year, students are expected to deepen their ability to make meaningful connections across physical sciences, life sciences, Earth and space sciences and engineering design. In third grade, your student will continue to build these connections by exploring key concepts such as understanding relationships between objects, planning and conducting investigations and constructing evidence-based explanations.

Through daily, hands-on science experiences, third graders will develop models and draw conclusions about both the physical and living world. By asking thoughtful questions and engaging in a variety of investigative activities, they will research, collect and analyze data—enhancing their understanding of natural processes while sharpening their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Encourage your student to continue to explore their world at home through asking questions, modeling, or making claims based on evidence.

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- What kinds of phenomena is my student going to be making sense of this year?
- How is my student going to be engaging with the practices of science?

Social Studies

Social studies helps students understand the world around them and how they can engage in it. In third grade, students will start learning about early America's story. They will learn about Native Americans who were first in Iowa, early colonial America and the thirteen colonies. developing their ability to ask historical questions and use evidence from primary sources to support their conclusions.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

Third graders will ask questions and gather information from various sources to make claims supported by evidence and share their learning. They will also compare Native American cultures, understand how geography and resources shaped communities and governments, and explore early European exploration and colonial history—including how the Thirteen Colonies developed their own governments and worked together to solve common problems. Finally, students will develop personal financial skills like setting goals, earning income, and managing money wisely.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Native Americans
- Early colonial America
- The Thirteen Colonies
- Budgeting (financial literacy)

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Visit the Meskwaki Cultural Center and Museum, the State Historical Museum, or a local museum to learn more about Native Americans in Iowa.
- Read children's books about early American history. Discuss what life was like for those who lived during that time.
- Learn about the Mayflower Compact. Discuss how the compact connects to the principle of self-government.
- Discuss how you budget and why budgeting is important in terms of short and long-term financial goals. Help students plan a budget for themselves.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- What are you learning about the Ioway?
- What is the Mayflower Compact? How did it impact colonial America?
- How many colonies were there in early American history? How were they alike? How were they different?
- What is a budget? Why is budgeting important?

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- How can I help my student better understand the social studies skills and/or content they will be learning about this year?
- How can I help my student ask better questions about what they are learning?