

**Unit 3: Mimicking Organisms to Solve Problems**

Instructional Days: 25

**Unit Summary**

In this unit of study, students develop an understanding of how plants and animals use their parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs. Students also need opportunities to develop possible solutions. As students develop possible solutions, one challenge will be to keep them from immediately implementing the first solution they think of and to instead think through the problem carefully before acting. Having students sketch their ideas or make a physical model is a good way to engage them in shaping their ideas to meet the requirements of the problem. The crosscutting concept of structure and function is called out as an organizing concept for the disciplinary core ideas. Students are expected to demonstrate grade-appropriate proficiency in constructing explanations, designing solutions, and in developing and using models. Students are expected to use these practices to demonstrate understanding of the core ideas.

This unit is based on 1-LS1-1 and K-2-ETS1-2.

**Student Learning Objectives**

**Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.\*** *[Clarification Statement: Examples of human problems that can be solved by mimicking plant or animal solutions could include designing clothing or equipment to protect bicyclists by mimicking turtle shells, acorn shells, and animal scales; stabilizing structures by mimicking animal tails and roots on plants; keeping out intruders by mimicking thorns on branches and animal quills; and, detecting intruders by mimicking eyes and ears.]* **(1-LS1-1)**

**Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem. ( K-2-ETS1-2)**

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1-LS1-1	Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grown and meet their needs
K-2-ETS1-1	Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool
ETS1.A	A situation that people want to change or create can be approached as a problem to be solved through engineering
ETS1.B	Designs can be conveyed through sketches, drawings, or physical models. These representations are useful in communicating ideas for a problem's solutions to other people
LS1.A	All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food, water and air. Plants also have different parts (roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits) that help them survive and grow
LS1.B	Adult plants and animals can have young. In many kinds of animals, parents and the offspring themselves engage in behaviors that help the offspring to survive
LS1.D	Animals have body parts that capture and convey different kinds of information needed to growth and survival. Animals respond to these inputs with behaviors that help them survive. Plants also respond to some eternal inputs
LS3.A	Young animals are very much, but not exactly, like their parents. Plants also are very much, but not exactly, like their parents
LS3.B	Individuals of the same kind of plant or animal are recognizable as similar but can also vary in many ways

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**Enduring Understandings**

- Engineers use objects and materials to build things that help us survive
- Math, Science, Technology and our thoughts and ideas can help us improve how we live and work

**Essential Questions**

- What skills do engineers need to use to be successful?
- Why are engineers needed?
- What are the qualities of a good solution to a problem?

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Unit Sequence	
<i>Part A: How can humans mimic how plants and animals use their external parts to help them survive and grow?</i>	
Concepts	Formative Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every human-made product is designed by applying some knowledge of the natural world and is built using materials derived from the natural world.</li> <li>• The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s).</li> <li>• All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food, water, and air. Plants also have different parts (roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits) that help them survive and grow.</li> <li>• Animals have body parts that capture and convey different kinds of information needed for growth and survival. Animals respond to these inputs with behaviors that help them survive. Plants also respond to some external inputs.</li> <li>• Designs can be conveyed through sketches, drawings, or physical models. These representations are useful in communicating ideas for a problem’s solutions to other people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Students who understand the concepts are able to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe and describe how the shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their functions.</li> <li>• Use materials to design a device that solves a specific problem or [design] a solution to a specific problem.</li> <li>• Use materials to design a solution to a human problem that mimics how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs: Examples of human problems that can be solved by mimicking plant or animal solutions could include:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Designing clothing or equipment to protect bicyclists by mimicking turtle shells, acorn shells, and animal scales.</li> <li>✓ Stabilizing structures by mimicking animal tails and roots on plants.</li> <li>✓ Keeping out intruders by mimicking thorns on branches and animal quills.</li> <li>✓ Detecting intruders by mimicking eyes and ears.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop a simple model based on evidence to represent a proposed object or tool.</li> <li>• Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem.</li> </ul>

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**What It Looks Like in the Classroom**

In this unit of study, students investigate how plants and animals use their external structures to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs. Then students are challenged to apply their learning to design a solution to a human problem that mimics how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.

In order to recognize ways in which animals and plants use their external structures, students need opportunities to observe and describe how the shape and stability of organisms' structures are related to their functions. Students can make direct observations and use media resources to find relevant examples for both plants and animals. They should observe that different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food, water, and air. In addition, animals have body parts that capture and convey different kinds of information from the environment, enabling them to respond to these inputs in ways that aid in survival. Plants, like animals, have different parts (roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits) that each serve specific functions in survival and growth, and plants also respond to external inputs. For each structure that students observe, they should describe how the shape and stability of that structure is related to its function.

The next step in this unit is to engage in engineering design. Students need opportunities to use materials to design a device that solves a specific human problem. Designs should mimic how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive and grow. The engineering design process students engage in should include the following steps:

- As a class or in small groups, students participate in shared research to find examples of human-made products that have been designed and built by applying knowledge of the natural world. For each example, students identify the human problem(s) that the product solves and how that solution was designed using an understanding of the natural world.
- Students brainstorm possible human problems that can be solved by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs. Examples could include:
  - ✓ Designing clothing or equipment to protect bicyclists that mimics turtle shells, acorn shells, and animal scales.
  - ✓ Stabilizing structures that mimic animal tails and plant roots.
  - ✓ Keeping out intruders by mimicking thorns on branches and animal quills.
  - ✓ Detecting intruders by mimicking eyes and ears.

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- In small groups, students use sketches, drawings, or physical models to convey a design that solves a problem by mimicking one or more external structures of plants and/or animals.
- Use materials to create the design solution.
- Share the design solution with others in the class.

**Connecting with English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics***English Language Arts*

Students participate in shared research and writing projects. Engaging in engineering design provides a perfect opportunity for students to conduct shared research and complete writing projects. Students can use text and media resources to gather information about how the shape and stability of external structures of organisms are related to their functions. In addition, students can conduct simple research to find examples of how humans solve problems using an understanding of the natural world. Examples of writing projects could include creating a book that includes examples of how humans mimic the characteristics of organisms to design solutions to human problems. Students can also use drawings or other visual displays to accompany their design solutions. Students will need support from teachers to conduct shared research and complete writing projects.

*Mathematics***N/A**

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**Modifications**

*(Note: Teachers identify the modifications that they will use in the unit. See NGSS Appendix D: [All Standards, All Students/Case Studies](#) for vignettes and explanations of the modifications.)*

- Structure lessons around questions that are authentic, relate to students' interests, social/family background and knowledge of their community.
- Provide students with multiple choices for how they can represent their understandings (e.g. multisensory techniques-auditory/visual aids; pictures, illustrations, graphs, charts, data tables, multimedia, modeling).
- Provide opportunities for students to connect with people of similar backgrounds (e.g. conversations via digital tool such as SKYPE, experts from the community helping with a project, journal articles, and biographies).
- Provide multiple grouping opportunities for students to share their ideas and to encourage work among various backgrounds and cultures (e.g. multiple representation and multimodal experiences).
- Engage students with a variety of Science and Engineering practices to provide students with multiple entry points and multiple ways to demonstrate their understandings.
- Use project-based science learning to connect science with observable phenomena.
- Structure the learning around explaining or solving a social or community-based issue.
- Provide ELL students with multiple literacy strategies.
- Collaborate with after-school programs or clubs to extend learning opportunities.
- Restructure lesson using UDL principals ([http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.VXmoXcfD\\_UA](http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.VXmoXcfD_UA)).

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**Research on Student Learning**

N/A

**Prior Learning**

**Kindergarten Unit 3: Weather**

- Asking questions, making observations, and gathering information are helpful in thinking about problems.

**Future Learning**

**Grade 4 Unit 3: Structures and Functions**

- Plants and animals have both internal and external structures that serve various functions in growth, survival, behavior, and reproduction.

**Grade 4 Unit 4: How Organisms Process Information**

- Different sense receptors are specialized for particular kinds of information, which may be then processed by the animal's brain. Animals are able to use their perceptions and memories to guide their actions.

**Connections to Other Units**

In **Unit 2, Characteristics of Living Things**, students observed and compared traits and patterns of behavior in organisms. This learning is foundational for the content and practices in this unit of study.



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**Sample of Open Education Resources**

[Eat Like a Bird! January](#): This lesson and activity is one of several lessons about birds. In this lesson, students learn that bird beaks come in many different sizes and shape. Each beak has a specific shape and function to help the bird to get and eat food.

[Why So Yummy](#): In this lesson students will investigate how fruits help some plants survive. The background information is important to the overall goals of this lesson. It states, "fruit-bearing plants can be distinguished from other plants, because they contain a reproductive structure that develops into an edible fruit. This reproductive structure is the shelter that protects the seeds until they are mature. This is important, because seeds are not distributed to the earth for germination until they are ripe." The teacher will need to purchase some fruits ahead of time for this lesson. Identifying a variety of fruits and especially fruits children might have less experience with will enhance the experience.

**Teacher Professional Learning Resources****[Connections Between Practices in NGSS, Common Core Math, and Common Core ELA](#)**

The presenter was Sarah Michaels from Clark University. In this seminar Dr. Michaels talked about connecting the scientific and engineering practices described in A Framework for K–12 Science Education with the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts.

**[Engineering Design as a Core Idea](#)**

The presenter was Cary Sneider, Associate Research Professor at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon. The seminar focused on the Core Idea of Engineering, led by Cary Sneider, Associate Research Professor at Portland State University. Cary explained the overall NGSS engineering components for K-2, MS and HS, and went through a number of practical examples of how teachers could develop modules and investigations for their students to learn them. Cary also spoke about the ways in which teachers could include cross-cutting engineering concepts to a number of classroom subjects. The seminar concluded with an overview of NSTA resources about NGSS available to teachers by Ted, and a Q & A session with Cary.

Visit the resource [collection](#).

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Continue discussing this topic in the [community forums](#).

**NGSS Core Ideas: From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes**

The presenters were Aaron Rogat of Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Barbara Hug of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The program featured strategies for teaching about life science concepts that answer questions such as "How do the structures of organisms enable life's functions?" and "How do organisms grow and develop?"

Dr. Hug began the presentation by discussing the arrangement of life science core ideas within NGSS and comparing them to previous standards. Next, Dr. Rogat shared an example of a learning progression, showing how a concept can be taught from early elementary through high school. The presenters then talked about strategies for instruction and shared links to resources. Participants had the opportunity to submit their questions and comments in the chat.

Visit the [resource collection](#).

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**Appendix A: NGSS and Foundations for the Unit**

**Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.\*** *[Clarification Statement: Examples of human problems that can be solved by mimicking plant or animal solutions could include designing clothing or equipment to protect bicyclists by mimicking turtle shells, acorn shells, and animal scales; stabilizing structures by mimicking animal tails and roots on plants; keeping out intruders by mimicking thorns on branches and animal quills; and, detecting intruders by mimicking eyes and ears.]* (1-LS1-1)

**Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps it function as needed to solve a given problem.** ( K-2-ETS1-2)

The performance expectations above were developed using the following elements from the NRC document [A Framework for K-12 Science Education](#):

Science and Engineering Practices	Disciplinary Core Ideas	Crosscutting Concepts
<p><b>Analyzing and Interpreting Data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze and interpret data to make sense of phenomena using logical reasoning. (3-LS3-1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use materials to design a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (1-LS1-1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Developing and Using Models</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a simple model based on evidence to represent a proposed object or tool. (K-2-ETS1-2)</li> </ul>	<p><b>LS1.A: Structure and Function</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All organisms have external parts. Different animals use their body parts in different ways to see, hear, grasp objects, protect themselves, move from place to place, and seek, find, and take in food, water and air. Plants also have different parts (roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits) that help them survive and grow. (1-LS1-1)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Patterns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns in the natural and human designed world can be observed, used to describe phenomena, and used as evidence. (1-LS1-2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Structure and Function</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s). (1-LS1-1)</li> <li>The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s). (K-2-ETS1-2)</li> </ul>

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	<p><b>LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adult plants and animals can have young. In many kinds of animals, parents and the offspring themselves engage in behaviors that help the offspring to survive. (1-LS1-2)</li> </ul> <p><b>LS1.D: Information Processing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Animals have body parts that capture and convey different kinds of information needed for growth and survival. Animals respond to these inputs with behaviors that help them survive. Plants also respond to some external inputs. (1-LS1-1)</li> </ul> <p><b>ETS1.B: Developing Possible Solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designs can be conveyed through sketches, drawings, or physical models. These representations are useful in communicating ideas for a problem's solutions to other people. (K-2-ETS1-2)</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Connections to Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science</i></b></p> <p><b>Influence of Science, Engineering and Technology on Society and the Natural World</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every human-made product is designed by applying some knowledge of the natural world and is built using materials derived from the natural world. (1-LS1-1)</li> </ul>
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English Language Arts	Mathematics
<p>Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of “how-to” books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions). (1-LS1-1)</p> <p>Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings. (K-2-ETS1-2) <b>SL.2.5</b></p>	

Common Vocabulary	
<p>Life</p> <p>Light</p> <p>Plant</p> <p>Birth</p> <p>Death</p> <p>Grow</p> <p>Seed</p> <p>Survive</p> <p>Comfort</p> <p>Environment</p> <p>Behavior</p>	<p>Growth</p> <p>Life cycle</p> <p>Mate</p> <p>Parent</p> <p>Predator</p> <p>Shelter</p> <p>Human</p> <p>Recycle</p> <p>Environmental</p>