

LS2.A: Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems

Grade Band	Disciplinary Core Idea Statement with 2021 Performance Expectation Linked
K–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plants depend on air, water, minerals (in the soil), and light to grow. Different plants survive better in different settings because they have varied needs for water, minerals, and sunlight. (2-LS2-1) Plants depend on animals for pollination or to move their seeds around. (2-LS2-2)
3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The food of almost any kind of animal can be traced back to plants (producers). Organisms are related in food webs in which some animals eat plants for food and other animals eat the animals that eat plants (either way they are consumers). Some organisms, such as fungi and bacteria, break down dead organisms (both plants or plants parts and animals) and therefore operate as “decomposers.” Decomposition eventually restores (recycles) some materials back to the soil. Organisms can survive only in environments in which their particular needs are met. A healthy ecosystem is one in which multiple species of different types are each able to meet their needs in a relatively stable web of life. Newly introduced species can damage the balance of an ecosystem. (5-LS2-1)
6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisms, and populations of organisms, are dependent on their environmental interactions both with other living things and with nonliving factors. In any ecosystem, organisms and populations with similar requirements for food, water, oxygen, or other resources may compete with each other for limited resources, access to which consequently constrains their growth and reproduction. Growth of organisms and population increases are limited by access to resources. (7-LS2-1) Similarly, predatory interactions may reduce the number of organisms or eliminate whole populations of organisms. Mutually beneficial interactions, in contrast, may become so interdependent that each organism requires the other for survival. Although the species involved in these competitive, predatory, and mutually beneficial interactions vary across ecosystems, the patterns of interactions of organisms with their environments, both living and nonliving, are shared. (7-LS2-2)

K-12 Conceptual Vertical Articulation of LS2 – Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

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Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="422 228 1976 415">• Ecosystems have carrying capacities, which are limits to the numbers of organisms and populations they can support. These limits result from such factors as the availability of living and nonliving resources and from such challenges such as predation, competition, and disease. Organisms would have the capacity to produce populations of great size were it not for the fact that environments and resources are finite. This fundamental tension affects the abundance (number of individuals) of species in any given ecosystem. (B-LS2-1)<li data-bbox="422 451 1976 638">• Ecosystems have carrying capacities, which are limits to the numbers of organisms and populations they can support. These limits result from such factors as the availability of living and nonliving resources and from such challenges such as predation, competition, and disease. Organisms would have the capacity to produce populations of great size were it not for the fact that environments and resources are finite. This fundamental tension affects the abundance (number of individuals) of species in any given ecosystem. (B-LS2-2)

LS2.B: Cycles of Matter and Energy in Ecosystems

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K–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LS2.B does not appear in any of the K-2 PEs.
3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matter cycles between the air and soil and among plants, animals, and microbes as these organisms live and die. Organisms obtain gases, and water, from the environment, and release waste matter (gas, liquid, or solid) back into the environment. (5-LS2-1)
6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food webs are models that demonstrate how matter and energy is transferred between producers, consumers, and decomposers as the three groups interact within an ecosystem. Transfers of matter into and out of the physical environment occur at every level. Decomposers recycle nutrients from dead plant or animal matter back to the soil in terrestrial environments or to the water in aquatic environments. The atoms that make up the organisms in an ecosystem are cycled repeatedly between the living and nonliving parts of the ecosystem. (7-LS2-3)
Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photosynthesis and cellular respiration (including anaerobic processes) provide most of the energy for life processes. (B-LS2-3) Plants or algae form the lowest level of the food web. At each link upward in a food web, only a small fraction of the matter consumed at the lower level is transferred upward, to produce growth and release energy in cellular respiration at the higher level. Given this inefficiency, there are generally fewer organisms at higher levels of a food web. Some matter reacts to release energy for life functions, some matter is stored in newly made structures, and much is discarded. The chemical elements that make up the molecules of organisms pass through food webs and into and out of the atmosphere and soil, and they are combined and recombined in different ways. At each link in an ecosystem, matter and energy are conserved. (B-LS2-4) Photosynthesis and cellular respiration are important components of the carbon cycle, in which carbon is exchanged among the biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and geosphere through chemical, physical, geological, and biological processes. (B-LS2-5)

LS2.C: Ecosystem Dynamics, Functioning, and Resilience

Grade Band	Disciplinary Core Idea Statement with 2021 Performance Expectation Linked
K–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LS2.C does not appear in any of the K-2 PEs.
3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the environment changes in ways that affect a place’s physical characteristics, temperature, or availability of resources, some organisms survive and reproduce, others move to new locations, yet others move into the transformed environment, and some die. (secondary) (3-LS4-4)
6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecosystems are dynamic in nature; their characteristics can vary over time. Disruptions to any physical or biological component of an ecosystem can lead to shifts in all its populations. (7-LS2-4) Biodiversity describes the variety of species found in Earth’s terrestrial and oceanic ecosystems. The completeness or integrity of an ecosystem’s biodiversity is often used as a measure of its health. (7-LS2-5)
Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A complex set of interactions within an ecosystem can keep its numbers and types of organisms relatively constant over long periods of time under stable conditions. If a modest biological or physical disturbance to an ecosystem occurs, it may return to its more or less original status (i.e., the ecosystem is resilient), as opposed to becoming a very different ecosystem. Extreme fluctuations in conditions or the size of any population, however, can challenge the functioning of ecosystems in terms of resources and habitat availability. (B-LS2-2) A complex set of interactions within an ecosystem can keep its numbers and types of organisms relatively constant over long periods of time under stable conditions. If a modest biological or physical disturbance to an ecosystem occurs, it may return to its more or less original status (i.e., the ecosystem is resilient), as opposed to becoming a very different ecosystem. Extreme fluctuations in conditions or the size of any population, however, can challenge the functioning of ecosystems in terms of resources and habitat availability. (B-LS2-6) Moreover, anthropogenic changes (induced by human activity) in the environment— including habitat destruction, pollution, introduction of invasive species, overexploitation, and climate change—can disrupt an ecosystem and threaten the survival of some species. (B-LS2-7)

LS2.D: Social Interactions and Group Behavior

Grade Band	Disciplinary Core Idea Statement with 2021 Performance Expectation Linked
K–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LS2.D does not appear in any of the K-2 PEs.
3–5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being part of a group helps animals obtain food, defend themselves, and cope with changes. Groups may serve different functions and vary dramatically in size. Groups can be collections of equal individuals, hierarchies with dominant members, small families, groups of single or mixed gender, or groups composed of individuals similar in age. Some groups are stable over long periods of time; others are fluid, with members moving in and out. Some groups assign specialized tasks to each member; in others, all members perform the same or a similar range of functions. (3-LS2-1)
6–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LS2.D does not appear in any of the 6-8 PEs.
Biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group behavior has evolved because membership can increase the chances of survival for individuals and their genetic relatives. (B-LS2-8)

Adapted from *The Framework for K-12 Science Education* and the *Next Generation Science Standards*.

References:

- National Research Council. (2012). *A Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- NGSS Lead States. (2013). *Next Generation Science Standards: For States, By States (Appendix E: Disciplinary Core Idea Progression)*. Retrieved from <https://www.nextgenscience.org/>