



Using the Learning Cycle to Teach Physical Science: A Hands-On Approach for the Middle Grades

By Paul Beisenherz, Marylou Dantonio

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Beisenherz and Dantonio propose a very different approach to teaching science—one that not only makes science more exciting to learn, but also helps students construct and apply basic concepts and develop thinking skills. Students come to appreciate science for what it really is: a process of inquiry, not just a body of knowledge.

Using a learning cycle strategy, the book enables students to construct discrete science concepts on their own. This occurs in three phases: an exploration phase, in which students are exposed to hands on activities and other experiences related to a particular concept; an introduction phase, in which the concept is formally introduced; and an application phase, in which the concept is reinforced and expanded through additional experiences. All phases of the learning cycle use teacher questions to guide the learning experience.

Beisenherz and Dantonio begin by discussing important questions to consider when presenting new concepts, then they introduce six basic physical science concepts with activities. The activities identify a problem's focus, list the materials needed, suggest procedures, highlight key questions to prompt the appropriate thinking processes, and include important background information. By the final section of the book, you are ready to develop your own learning cycle sequence.

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