

SCIENCE INSTRUCTION

IN THE MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

F O U R T H E D I T I O N



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SCIENCE INSTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Fourth Edition

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Merrill,

an imprint of Prentice Hall

Upper Saddle River, New Jersey Columbus, Ohio

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chiappetta, Eugene L.

Science instruction in the middle and secondary schools/
Eugene L. Chiappetta, Thomas R. Koballa, Jr., Alfred T. Collette.
—4th ed.

p. cm.

Collette's name appears first on the earlier edition;

Koballa's name does not appear on earlier edition.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-13-651118-X (alk. paper)

I. Science—Study and teaching (Secondary)—United
States. I. Koballa, Thomas R. II. Collette, Alfred T. III Title.

Q183.3.A1C637 1998

507'.1'273—dc21

97-14717
• CIP

Cover photo: © David Young-Wolff/Photo Edit

Editor: Bradley J. Potthoff

Production Editor: Alexandrina Benedicto Wolf

Design Coordinator: Julia Zonneveld Van Hook

Text Designer: Mia Saunders

Cover Designer: Thomas Mack

Production Manager: Pamela D. Bennett

Electronic Text Management: Marilyn Wilson Phelps, Matthew
Williams, Karen L. Bretz, Tracey B. Ward

Director of Marketing: Kevin Flanagan

Marketing Manager: Suzanne Stanton

Advertising/Marketing Coordinator: Julie Shough

This book was set in Berkeley Old Style and Zapf Humanist by
Prentice Hall and was printed and bound by Courier/Kendall-
ville, Inc. The cover was printed by Phoenix Color Corp.



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Simon & Schuster/A Viacom Company

Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458

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any form or by any means, without permission in writing from
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Earlier editions, © 1994 by Macmillan Publishing; 1989, 1986
by Merrill Publishing Company.

Photo credits: pp. 2, 17, 22, 31, 44, 56, 60, 74, 93, 100, 110,
120, 134, 138, 151, 160, 182, 196, 199, 208, 216, 217, 223,
236, 245, 258, 262, 267, 286, 296, 312, 318, 319, 330, 350,
351, 356, 366, and 372 by the Authors; p. 13 Courtesy of
Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center; and p. 164 Courtesy of
National Aeronautic and Space Administration.

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

ISBN: 0-13-651118-X

Prentice-Hall International (UK) Limited, *London*

Prentice-Hall of Australia Pty. Limited, *Sydney*

Prentice-Hall of Canada, Inc., *Toronto*

Prentice-Hall Hispanoamericana, S. A., *Mexico*

Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, *New Delhi*

Prentice-Hall of Japan, Inc., *Tokyo*

Simon & Schuster Asia Pte. Ltd., *Singapore*

Editora Prentice-Hall do Brasil, Ltda., *Rio de Janeiro*

Frank Darrow

To the science educators who made significant contributions to this text through their research, scholarship, and suggestions and to the members of the science teaching profession who are graduates of our respective science education programs



PREFACE

Science Instruction in the Middle and Secondary Schools is intended to help science teachers prepare students to become scientifically and technologically literate in order for them to lead a productive life in a sophisticated biotechnological, electronic, and communication era. This goal presents a tremendous challenge for science teachers because of the fundamental understanding that students must acquire concerning science, mathematics, and technology, and because of the dynamic nature of the American society with its cultural diversity and ongoing social changes. In addition, there are too many students reporting that science courses are difficult and uninteresting. It is also the case that some segments of our society are not only underrepresented in science and engineering professions but are receiving a less than adequate science education.

In response to the present situation in science education, a national science education reform movement is underway in America. Two foci of the reform emphasize that science is for all students and that learning science is an active process. Another focus is the teacher. We believe that science teachers must consider many facets of science teaching in order to provide science courses that meet students' needs and help them to appreciate science and technology. Teachers must understand the nature of science and technology and possess a strong content background. They must also understand how students learn and be able to ascertain what knowledge and skills students possess when they enter the classroom. Teachers must be able to use a variety of instructional strategies to help students represent knowledge and find meaning in it. Furthermore, science teachers

must be able to develop alternative and authentic assessment programs that address many learning outcomes in order to determine student achievement. Finally, science teachers should become active in local, state, and national professional organizations so that they continue to stay up-to-date and grow professionally.

New features have been added to the fourth edition. Open cases can be found near the beginning of many chapters. "Stop and Reflect" exercises have been placed at the end of certain sections within each chapter. "Resources to Examine" are at the end of each chapter. Little science puzzlers, science demonstrations, and science laboratory activities can be found in the appendixes. These features are described below.

Use of This Text

Those who use this methods textbook should use it interactively. Exactly how it will be used must be in accord with the instructor's own background and expertise in science and science teaching. In some instances the book may be used to introduce concepts or ideas that are later expanded upon through class discussion, teacher demonstration, or laboratory activities. Here the book serves as the students' first contact with understandings critical to their success as future teachers. At other times the book may be used to provide students with additional information regarding an important idea or teaching practice after it is introduced in class. Here the book functions to reinforce and strengthen the understandings introduced by the instructor. By no means should this book be viewed as the sole and definitive source on science teaching and learning.

Features of the Text

Science Instruction in the Middle and Secondary Schools has many unique and useful features. Of particular interest are vignettes and open cases that highlight particular teaching situations. These offer wonderful opportunities for students to critique and reflect on real-life classroom experiences. A feature called “Stop and Reflect” appears frequently in most chapters to help students review and construct meaningful understandings from what they have read. These segments in the textbook will further assist methods course instructors to use the text interactively.

Many activities are described in the text to highlight important teaching methods and aspects of science learning. In addition, many science activities are described in the appendixes for methods course instructors and their students to use. These activities are grouped as science puzzlers (Appendix A), science demonstrations (Appendix B), and science laboratory exercises (Appendix C). At the end of each chapter, an “Assessing and Reviewing” section includes activities and questions that may be used during class or assigned for homework. A section new to this fourth edition called “Resources to Examine” provides information about additional readings, activities, and science teaching materials that we believe all science teachers should have for their professional development.

This methods textbook is the result of more than forty-five years of science education experience. During these years, many changes have occurred in the profession. Nevertheless, other aspects have remained the same. Science teachers who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their work and who make science rel-

evant and interesting seem to produce positive results through their teaching. We have tried to emphasize in this textbook what effective science teachers have always displayed in their teaching as well as to incorporate new research findings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people contributed to this textbook, both to this edition and to past editions. We very much appreciate them. We would especially like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the fourth edition: April Adams, Spring Woods High School; Jill Bailer, Jane Long Middle School; Steve Fleming, Pasadena High School; Sara McNeil, University of Houston; Virginia Tucker, Spring Woods High School; Robert Wright, Chevron Corporation; Eric Pyle, West Virginia University; David Butts, University of Georgia; and Robert Shrigley, Pennsylvania State University.

The invaluable feedback of the following reviewers are also greatly appreciated: Michael Odell, University of Idaho; Samuel A. Spiegel, Florida State University; and Robert E. Yager, The University of Iowa.

Finally, with deep gratitude, we would like to thank our families for their support and encouragement during the preparation of this book.

Eugene L. Chiappetta
Thomas R. Koballa, Jr.
Alfred T. Collette

BRIEF CONTENTS

PART ONE

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHING SCIENCE 1

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF SCIENCE 2

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL STANDARDS
AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS 22

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENT
LEARNERS AND THEIR SCHOOLS 44

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING IN MIDDLE GRADES
AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS 74

PART TWO

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 99

CHAPTER 5

INQUIRY AND TEACHING SCIENCE 100

CHAPTER 6

LECTURE, DISCUSSION, AND DEMONSTRATION 134

CHAPTER 7

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY 160

CHAPTER 8

LABORATORY AND FIELD WORK 182

CHAPTER 9

SAFETY IN THE LABORATORY AND CLASSROOM 208

CHAPTER 10

COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY 236

CHAPTER 11

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 258

PART THREE

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION 285

CHAPTER 12

PLANNING AND TEACHING SCIENCE LESSONS 286

CHAPTER 13

PLANNING A SCIENCE UNIT 312

PART FOUR

ASSESSMENT IN SCIENCE TEACHING 329

CHAPTER 14

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES 330

PART FIVE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 365

CHAPTER 15

GROWING PROFESSIONALLY
AND EVALUATING TEACHING 366

APPENDIXES

A: LITTLE SCIENCE PUZZLERS 379

B: SCIENCE DEMONSTRATIONS 385

C: SCIENCE LABORATORY ACTIVITIES 395

CONTENTS

PART ONE

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHING SCIENCE 1

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF SCIENCE 2

What Is Science?	4
Arriving at a Definition of Science	4
Many Facets of Science	4
Themes of Scientific Literacy as They Relate to Instruction	9
Science as a Way of Thinking	10
Science as a Way of Investigating	12
Science as a Body of Knowledge	15
Science and Its Interactions with Technology and Society	17
Assessing and Reviewing	18
Resources to Examine	18
References	19

CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL STANDARDS AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS 22

Introduction	24
A Brief History of Science Education	24
The Period between 1800 and 1910	24
The Period between 1910 and 1955	25
The Period between 1955 and 1970	26
The Period between 1970 and 1980	26
The Period between 1980 and 1990	27
National Guidelines and Standards	28
Project 2061	28
National Science Education Standards	30

Scope, Sequence, and Coordination	31
-----------------------------------	----

Innovative Middle School Science Programs 34

Great Explorations in Math and Science	34
Project WILD	34
Science Education for Public Understanding Program	35
Integrated Science	36

Innovative High School Science Programs 36

BSCS Biology: A Human Approach	36
Biology: A Community Context	37
Insights in Biology	37
Chemistry in the Community	38
Conceptual Physics	39

Assessing and Reviewing 39

Resources to Examine 40

References 41

CHAPTER 3

THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENT LEARNERS AND THEIR SCHOOLS 44

Student Diversity	46
Demographics	46
Factors Affecting Success in Science	46
Equity in Science Education	47
Culturally Based Deficiencies	47
Multicultural Science Education	49
Nature of Science	49
Multicultural Science Classrooms	50
Gender and Science Education	52
Exceptional Students	54
Inclusion and the Law	54
Learning Disabilities	55
Physical Disabilities	56
Gifted and Talented Students	58

Adolescent Development	59
Physical Development	59
Cognitive Development	60
Personal and Social Development	63
Implications of Developmental Perspectives	64

Middle and Secondary Schools 65

High Schools	66
Junior High Schools	66
Middle Schools	66
School Restructuring	66
Magnet Schools	69

Assessing and Reviewing	69
-------------------------	----

Resources to Examine	70
----------------------	----

References	71
------------	----

CHAPTER 4

LEARNING IN MIDDLE GRADES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS 74

Introduction	76
--------------	----

Constructivism and Teaching Science	76
-------------------------------------	----

Affective Learning	81
Affective Concepts	81
Affect and Action	82
Persuasion	82
Cognition in Affect	83
Motivation	83

Equilibration and Contradictions	84
----------------------------------	----

Alternative Conceptions and Conceptual Change	86
---	----

Meaningful Learning and Concept Mapping	90
---	----

Images and Analogies	91
----------------------	----

Assessing and Reviewing	96
-------------------------	----

Resources to Examine	97
----------------------	----

References	97
------------	----

PART TWO

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT 99

CHAPTER 5 INQUIRY AND TEACHING SCIENCE 100

What Is Inquiry?	102
Teaching Science by Inquiry	103
Teaching Science as Inquiry	104

Strategies and Techniques for Conducting Inquiry-Based Instruction	108
--	-----

Asking Questions	108
Science Process Skills	110
Discrepant Events	113

Inductive Approach	113
Deductive Approach	118
Gathering Information	119
Problem Solving	121
Science Projects	123

Grouping and Cooperative Learning	124
-----------------------------------	-----

Concerns Associated with Inquiry-Based Science Instruction	127
--	-----

Assessing and Reviewing	129
-------------------------	-----

Resources to Examine	130
----------------------	-----

References	131
------------	-----

CHAPTER 6

LECTURE, DISCUSSION, AND DEMONSTRATION 134

The Lecture Method	136
--------------------	-----

Lecture Forms	136
Preparing the Lecture	137
Presenting Successful Lectures	139

The Discussion Method	139
-----------------------	-----

Discussion Types	141
Preparing for the Discussion	142
Conducting a Successful Discussion	144

Construction and Use of Oral Questions	145
--	-----

Constructing Clear Oral Questions	145
Lower- and Higher-Order Questions	146
Probing and Redirecting Questions	148
Wait Time and Teacher Statements	148
Target Students	149

The Demonstration	150
-------------------	-----

Functions of Demonstrations	150
Advantages and Limitations of Demonstrations	152
Planning a Demonstration	154
Presenting a Demonstration	155

Assessing and Reviewing	157
-------------------------	-----

Resources to Examine	157
----------------------	-----

References	158
------------	-----

CHAPTER 7 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY 160

Rationale	162
-----------	-----

What Is Technology?	164
---------------------	-----

Incorporating STS into the Curriculum	165
---------------------------------------	-----

Designing Technological Products and Systems	165
Addressing Issues and Problems	168

Considerations for STS Instruction	173
------------------------------------	-----

General Guidelines	174
--------------------	-----

Evolution versus Creationism—Dealing with Nonscience Tenets	175
---	-----

Assessing and Reviewing	178
Resources to Examine	179
References	180

CHAPTER 8

LABORATORY AND FIELD WORK **182**

What Is Laboratory Work?	184
Approaches to Laboratory Work	185
Science Process Skill Laboratory	185
Deductive or Verification Laboratory	189
Inductive Laboratory	190
Technical Skill Laboratory	193
Problem-Solving Laboratory	195
Preparing Students for Laboratory Experiences	195
Prelaboratory Discussion	195
Giving Directions	196
Postlaboratory Discussion	197
Ensuring Successful Laboratory Experiences	198
Relevance of Laboratory Work	198
Degree of Structure in Laboratory Activities	198
Student Recording and Reporting of Data	199
Management and Discipline During Laboratory Activities	200
Evaluation	201
Field Work	202
Planning Field Trip Experiences	203
Conducting a Field Experience	203
Assessing and Reviewing	205
Resources to Examine	206
References	206

CHAPTER 9

SAFETY IN THE LABORATORY AND CLASSROOM **208**

Introduction	210
Safety and the Law	210
General Safety Responsibilities	211
Preparation before the School Year Begins	211
Safety Responsibilities during the School Year	213
Safety Goggles and Eye Protection	215
Specific Safety Guidelines for Biology	217
Precautions for Using Animals	217
Precautions for Specific Biology Procedures and Activities	220
Additional Considerations for Safety in Biology Teaching	222
Specific Safety Guidelines for Chemistry	222
Chemistry Safety Precautions	222
Storing and Using Chemicals Safely	224

Other Suggestions for Safety	224
Disposing of Chemical Wastes	226
Safety in the Earth Science Laboratory	227
Safety Guidelines for Physics and Physical Science Laboratories	228
Radiation Safety	230
Using Live Animals in Radiation Work	230
Storing and Using Radioactive Materials	230
Personal Work Habits during Radiation Exercises	230
Suggestions for Use of Nonionizing Radiation	231
Safety Units for Students	231
Assessing and Reviewing	233
Resources to Examine	233
References	234

CHAPTER 10

COMPUTERS AND ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY **236**

Usefulness of Modern Technology for Teachers and Students	238
Computers and Electronic Technology in Science Instruction	239
Microcomputer-Based Instruction	239
Microcomputer-Based Laboratories	240
Computer-Based Multimedia	242
Telecommunications	245
Virtual Reality	247
Science Software and Its Instructional Uses	248
Drill-and-Practice	248
Tutorial	248
Simulations	249
Problem Solving	249
Using Computers to Support Science Instruction	250
Record Keeping	250
Preparation of Instruction	252
Assessment	252
Selecting Quality Software and Multimedia	253
Assessing and Reviewing	254
Resources to Examine	255
References	256

CHAPTER 11

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT **258**

Planning for Well-Managed Classrooms	260
Classroom Setting	260
Rules and Procedures	261
Instructional Practices	263
Curriculum	264
Identifying Causes of Student Misbehavior	265

Home Background	267
Academic Ability	268
The Teacher	268
School Administration	268
Health-Related Reasons	269
Personality-Related Reasons	269
Models for Classroom Management	269
Relationship-Listening	271
Confronting-Contracting	271
Rules and Consequences	272
Using the Models Advantageously	273
Useful Suggestions for Good Classroom Management	273
Seek Student Cooperation	274
Consider the School Calendar	275
Become Familiar with the School Routine	275
Know the Students	275
Involve Students	276
Practice Self-Control	276
Follow Good Testing Procedures	277
Give Encouragement and Praise	277
Project Personality and Enthusiasm	278
Control Noise Levels	278
Discuss Misbehaviors with Students	278
Change Seating and Isolate Students	279
Know When and How to Use Punishment	279
Student Violence	280
Assessing and Reviewing	281
Resources to Examine	282
References	282

PART THREE

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION 285

CHAPTER 12

PLANNING AND TEACHING

SCIENCE LESSONS 286

Highlighting Effective and Ineffective Practices 288

Science Teacher Knowledge 290

Student-Centered Planning 292

Reflecting on the Pedagogical

Content of a Science Lesson 292

Reflecting on the Methodology of a Science Lesson 294

Instructional Strategies 294

Teaching Skills 295

Teaching Materials 296

Constructing Instructional Objectives 297

Performance Component 298

Condition Component 298

Criterion Component 299

Daily Plan Book 301

Designing a Science Lesson Plan 301

Short-Form Lesson Plan 302

Long-Form Lesson Plan 302

Reflective Planning 303

Teaching and Receiving Feedback 305

Assessing and Reviewing 309

Resources to Examine 310

References 310

CHAPTER 13

PLANNING A SCIENCE UNIT 312

Introduction 314

The Science Reform and Planning

Science Instruction 314

Resources to Consider for Unit Plans 314

An Example of a Teacher-Planned Science Unit 315

Instructional Activities 315

Instructional Objectives 321

Grading Specification 322

Assessment and Testing 322

A Concept Map 323

Ideas and Elements to Consider

for Planning a Science Unit 324

Assessing and Reviewing 326

Resources to Examine 326

References 327

PART FOUR

ASSESSMENT IN SCIENCE TEACHING 329

CHAPTER 14

ASSESSING LEARNING OUTCOMES 330

Reconceptualizing Assessment 332

Objectives and Assessment 333

Important Concepts in Assessment 333

Diagnostic Assessment 333

Formative Assessment 333

Summative Assessment 335

Norm-Referenced Assessments 335

Criterion-Referenced Assessments 335

Reliability 335

Validity 336

Assessing Affective Outcomes 336

Measuring Affective Outcomes 337

Direct Approaches to Determine Values and Attitudes 339

Assessing Psychomotor Objectives 339

Science Tests 341

Classifying Test Questions	341
Types of Test Items	343
Alternative Assessment	346
Observation	346
Interviews	346
Concept Mapping	348
Journals	349
Performance Assessment Tasks	350
Open-Ended Problems	351
Drawings	352
Portfolios	352
Scoring Rubrics	353
Grading and Reporting Grades	354
Criterion-Referenced Grading	354
Norm-Referenced Grading	354
Keeping Records of Performance	357
Assigning Final Grades	359
The Meaning of Grades	360
Assessing and Reviewing	360
Resources to Examine	361
References	362

PART FIVE

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 365

CHAPTER 15

GROWING PROFESSIONALLY AND EVALUATING TEACHING 366

The Importance of Professional Development	368
Professional Development through Inservice Courses, Workshops, and Graduate Work	368
Inservice Courses and Workshops	368
Graduate Work	369
Professional Organizations for Science Teachers	369
National Professional Organizations	369
Statewide Professional Organizations	369
Local Professional Organizations for Science Teachers	370
Writing for Publication	371
Other Activities for Professional Growth	371
Communication with Other Science Teachers	371
Travel	371
Summer Employment	372
Hobbies	372
Research	372
Leaves of Absence	373
Keeping Up-to-Date through Reading	374

Evaluating Teacher Performance in the Classroom	374
Videotapes	374
Questionnaires	376
Maintaining a Resume	376
Assessing and Reviewing	377
Resources to Examine	378
References	378

APPENDIX A

LITTLE SCIENCE PUZZLERS 379

A Drop of Water	379
Hot Is Hot	380
How Strong Is Strong?	381
Thick and Thin Light Bulb Filaments	381
The Eggciting Egg Hunt	382
Raisins on the Move	382

APPENDIX B

SCIENCE DEMONSTRATIONS 385

Bernoulli's Principle	385
The No-Pop Balloon	387
Bruising Fruit	388
Pull It or Yank It—What Is the Difference?	390
How Does a Weather Vane Work?	391
Making a Cloud	392

APPENDIX C

SCIENCE LABORATORY ACTIVITIES 395

The Colorful World of Acid/Base Indicators	395
The Diffusion of Molecules and Ions	397
Osmosis and a Chicken Egg	398
Radioactive Half-Life	399
Respiration in Yeast	401
Mass and Volume Relationships	404

INDEX

PART ONE



BACKGROUND FOR TEACHING SCIENCE

CHAPTER 1

The Nature of Science

CHAPTER 2

National Standards and Innovative Programs

CHAPTER 3

The Nature of Adolescent Learners and Their Schools

CHAPTER 4

Learning in Middle Grades and Secondary Schools

CHAPTER 1



THE NATURE OF SCIENCE



Science can be thought of as the study of nature in an attempt to understand it and to create knowledge.

Science instruction must reflect valid views of the nature of science. Teachers' lectures, classroom discussions, laboratory activities, assigned readings, long-term investigations, and examination questions should correspond to what are generally accepted as science content and processes. Erroneous beliefs about how scientists go about their work must be eliminated, as must highly simplistic approaches to problem solving and overly simplistic examples of concepts, laws, and principles that distort this scientific knowledge. Science teachers, curriculum developers, and science educators must possess a broad understanding of the nature of science so that they make accurate interpretations and presentations of this discipline. Further, their understanding must lead to helping students appreciate the worth of science and how it can benefit their lives. Science teaching must be in line with relevant and authentic science information in order to improve the scientific literacy of all Americans.

OBJECTIVES

This chapter is designed to help the reader meet the following objectives:

- Arrive at a definition of science that represents what scientists do in their work.
- Reflect upon the extent to which science teaching situations exhibit "authentic science" after examining many facets of the scientific enterprise that are associated with the history and philosophy of science.
- Analyze science teaching situations and instructional materials to determine the extent to which they reflect four dimensions or themes of scientific literacy that are central to science teaching.

WHAT IS SCIENCE?

Arriving at a Definition of Science

Science is a broad-based human enterprise that is defined differently depending on the individuals who view it. The layperson might define science as a body of scientific information; the scientist might view it as a set of procedures by which hypotheses are tested; a philosopher might regard science as a way of questioning the truthfulness of what we know. All of these views are valid, but each presents just a partial definition of science; only collectively do they begin to define the comprehensive nature of science. Science is an enterprise that has changed over the centuries. Further, it encompasses many fields, such as physics, chemistry, biology, and the geosciences, which sometimes employ different approaches to the study of reality. Let's examine what scientists attempt to do in their work to assist in arriving at a definition of science.

Science can be thought of as the study of nature in an attempt to understand it and to create new knowledge that provides predictive power and application. This description is implied in the following statement by Edward Teller (1991), an eminent nuclear physicist:

A scientist has three responsibilities: one is to understand, two is to explain that understanding and three is to apply the results of that understanding. A scientist should have no other limitations. A scientist isn't responsible for that which he has discovered (pp. 1, 15).

The notion that scientists try to **understand**, **explain**, and **apply** offers science teachers a simple and clear idea of the scientific enterprise. Scientists strive to understand the phenomena that make up our universe—from the pulsating beats of our hearts to the migration of birds to the explosion of stars. Their aim is to describe the internal and external structure of objects, the mechanisms of forces, and the occurrence of events to the point where their descriptions can be used to predict future events with great precision. Scientific understanding goes beyond description to the deeper level of explanation that coalesces many observations, facts, laws, and generalizations into coherent theories that connect ideas with reality, not only specifying what is occurring, but how and why it is occurring.

Scientists **make public** their understanding through carefully prepared papers. Often their manuscripts are presented at professional meetings and published in professional journals. In both instances, and especially the latter, the work is carefully reviewed by colleagues who make critical comments and suggestions, thereby recommending the work for publication or rejection. Published works are open to additional examination by the scien-

tific community where the **logic and reasoning** can be evaluated and procedures and results can be tested by additional observation and experimentation. Further, the work is open to scrutiny by colleagues in order to determine if **ethical principles** have been violated, such as presenting erroneous data or taking credit for discoveries that others have claimed. Scientific ideas must be articulated in a manner that permits other scientists to **confirm** them, to determine their validity, and to translate the knowledge into useful products.

In addition to understanding and explaining phenomena, scientists strive to apply the knowledge that they construct about the world. Many scientists, along with engineers and technologists, spend much of their time designing and producing **useful products** for society. Most of these products hold the potential to improve the quality of life, such as manufactured drugs, genetically engineered hormones, electronic communications, superconducting devices, and the like. It's impossible to calculate the number of ways in which science and engineering have added to our quality of life, but the fact that they have done so has earned them high esteem in our society.

The earlier statement that we quoted by Edward Teller that scientists are not responsible for their work is open to debate, because many would argue that science is a human activity and those involved must be responsible for their actions and products. There is a significant relationship between science and society, in which the society keeps watch over and influences the scientific enterprise.

■ STOP AND REFLECT! ■

Before reading further, do the following:

- Answer the question, What is science? Include in your answer what scientists do in their work.
 - Use your definition of science to examine the activity "Investigating Animals' Reactions to Light" in Box 1.1 and indicate the extent to which Mr. Pearl's instruction reflects authentic science.
-

Many Facets of Science

There is more to science than the definition of science and the activities of scientists presented so far. Science encompasses many diverse ideas and has evolved over many thousands of years. Further, various aspects of science are viewed differently by scientists, philosophers,

BOX 1.1

INVESTIGATING ANIMALS' RESPONSES TO LIGHT

Mr. Pearl initiated the study of ecology with a set of investigations concerning animals' responses to light. The inquiry took place over several weeks and paralleled many other instructional activities on the topic. The following is an overview of how Mr. Pearl directed this activity. He began by introducing the project and outlining the procedures to be followed.

MR. PEARL: Over the next three weeks I want the class to study the responses of various animals to light. You will begin by working independently and then with your laboratory group. To start, I want you to do the following:

- Make a list of five to ten animals and describe how you believe they react to light. Consider when the animals seek food, eat, and sleep. Remember that humans are classified as animals just as insects, birds, and mammals are.
- For each animal, explain its response to light by specifying how the behavior is beneficial to the organism.
- Identify two or three animals that you wish to study because it is possible to either observe them in their natural environment or to maintain them in our classroom/laboratory.

After the students thought and wrote for ten minutes, Mr. Pearl led a discussion regarding the animals they listed and their respective reactions to light. The discussion was lively and brought forth many ideas. The students mentioned the nocturnal behavior of bats, owls, and moths. Some students talked about fishing and how certain fish seem to be more active during various times of the day. Others focused on the habits of ants, termites, and worms. One student mentioned reading about the psychological effects that winter has on some people due to the lack of sunshine.

The students were placed into groups to discuss which animals they might study. Then Mr. Pearl worked with each group to select an animal that was feasible for the group to study. The animals identified for this inquiry were brine shrimp, tadpoles, meal worms, and ants. Most of these organisms could be studied in the biology classroom/laboratory. However, one group indicated that they wanted to use a pond in a wooded area of their neighborhood where tadpoles could be observed.

At this point the teacher provided these additional directions to the students:

1. In your laboratory notebook, name the animal you are studying.
2. Write a paragraph describing how your organism might react to light.
3. List five to eight questions that you will attempt to answer from your investigation. Below are a few questions to consider.
 - How does the intensity of the light affect the animal?
 - Does heat play a role in the response to light?I'll stop here because I want you to generate the questions. When you have a list of questions, discuss them with your lab partners and together decide on the questions you will attempt to answer. Then show the questions to me so that we can determine their suitability for guiding your inquiry.
4. Design procedures to answer your questions regarding light and animal behavior. On a sheet of paper, list a question and outline the procedure that will provide an answer to it. I will discuss the procedure with you and offer suggestions. After