

Academic Core Level D



Teacher's Guide

The United States of America





National Institute for Direct Instruction

Academic Core: A direct approach to teaching fundamental Science and Social Studies concepts

Enclosed is Level D of the Academic Core. This teacher-directed instructional program teaches the 50 states that compose the United States, the Great Lakes, and the United States borders.

The program is broken into three units. Each unit has 11 to 25 lessons. The lessons are to be presented daily to the whole class and take approximately 20 minutes to teach. The program is sequenced so that information does not overlap and become confusing. Units need to be taught in sequence.

If you have questions concerning the program or implementation, contact info@nifdi.org.

Academic Core Level D

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Overview of NIFDI Academic Core

Academic Core is a highly structured four-level program (A through D) developed by the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) to teach students important science facts and information. The program ensures mastery of sophisticated information and includes a built-in rewards system to motivate and reinforce students. Measurement, time, the solar system, rocks, body systems, and United States geography are just a few of the units included in Academic Core Levels A through D.

Academic Core is intended for students in grades 2 and above. Each level is divided into units. Each unit is focused on one specific topic. There are 11 to 25 lessons in each unit in Level D. The lessons take approximately 20 minutes to teach and should be scheduled daily. Each lesson is designed to be presented to the entire class but can also be presented to small groups.

Academic Core is primarily a verbal program directed by the teacher. The teacher presents lessons from a script and students respond verbally. Once brought to verbal mastery, students respond to questions in writing. Many units include reference charts, maps, or displays. This material is on a PowerPoint display contained on a CD. (For teachers who do not have access to the equipment necessary to use the PowerPoint displays, printable PDFs are also available on the CD.) Most units stand alone; however, some units are dependent upon information from earlier ones. This overlap of information requires the teacher to either follow the exact sequence of each level or to make sure the students know the prerequisite information.

Review

Academic Core does not have a built-in review component; however, the information must be continually reviewed if the students are to remember it. An efficient way to accomplish this is with Review Fridays.

Each Friday, review information is presented. The teacher presents the last two lessons of any unit previously taught. For example, if units 1 and 2 have been taught, the teacher may select any one of these two units to review. The review lessons — the final two lessons in the unit — are marked with the following banner:

REGULAR LESSON/MASTERY TEST • FRIDAY REVIEW

All students should be at least 90% accurate on Friday Review lessons. If they are not at mastery, the unit or the material missed should be repeated.



Evaluation

Mastery Tests

The last two lessons of each unit are Mastery Tests. The lessons are a series of questions on the material that was presented during the unit. Students produce written responses to teacher questions and check their work upon completion. Approximate spellings for complex vocabulary or labels are acceptable. At least 90% of students must be at 90% accuracy or above on information before the next unit is started.

Mastery Over Time

Challenge Rounds

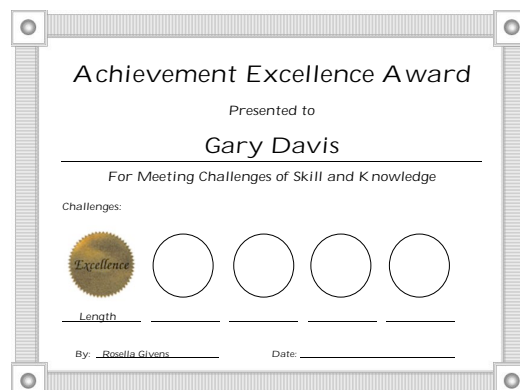
Challenge Rounds are assessments of retention over time. Challenge Rounds are different than the end of unit Mastery Tests. Students take Challenge Round tests from any unit presented up to that point. Challenge Rounds may not include the 15 lessons most recently taught. The challenges ask students to both recall specific information and to use information that they have learned to solve problems. Students who pass the tests earn stickers on a certificate of achievement.

Challenge Rounds are scheduled during the year to provide opportunities to celebrate students' academic achievement in learning difficult information. Challenge Rounds should begin approximately 30 lessons after Academic Core has started and are held the last full week of each month.

Challenge Awards

A student earns a seal on a certificate of achievement every time he/she passes a Challenge Round. Passing five Challenge Rounds earns a certificate. Special recognition such as a medal, letter home, or being honored by the principal should be given after the student earns the second certificate. The number of stickers required for each award level is summarized below.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 5 stickers | Certificate |
| 10 stickers (cumulative) | Certificate + Special Recognition (Silver medal, letter home, or award assembly.) |
| 15 stickers (cumulative) | Certificate + Special Recognition (Gold medal, letter home, or award assembly.) |



Pass Criteria for Challenge Rounds

Each student must perform at 90% accuracy or above to pass a Challenge Round. Any student who fails may retake a Challenge, but must wait at least three full instructional days before retaking it. The passing criterion is still 90%. Students may retake Challenges until they pass.

Examples:

- If Gary fails the Eastern States and Great Lakes Challenge on Monday, the first day he can retake the Eastern States and Great Lakes challenge is Thursday.
- If Maria fails the Western States Challenge on Thursday, she may not retake it until the following Tuesday.

Getting Started

Academic Core should start with a motivating kickoff event. Tell the students a few interesting facts about the information they will learn during the year. Emphasize that the material is difficult and that even many adults do not know all the things that they are going to learn. Show them the certificate of achievement and describe the silver and gold medals or the special recognition that they will earn. Teach students that the harder they work, the smarter they'll get. Follow this introductory routine for several days.

Achievement Excellence Award

Presented to

For Meeting Challenges of Skill and Knowledge

Challenges:

By: _____ Date: _____

SUMMARY of Information Taught in Level D

Unit 1. EASTERN U.S. AND GREAT LAKES

The **United States** is made up of **50** states.

Two of those are off by themselves and do not touch any of the other states.

There are 48 states that touch each other.

There were **13 states** at first:

New Hampshire (9)

Massachusetts (6)

Rhode Island (13) – smallest of the states

Connecticut (5)

New York (11) – state that has the largest city – New York City

Pennsylvania (2)

New Jersey (3)

Delaware (1)

Maryland (7)

Virginia (10)

North Carolina (12)

South Carolina (8)

Georgia (4)

The United States was formed in the year **1776**.

There are five **Great Lakes**:

Lake Superior (a) – is the largest

Lake Michigan (b) – is the second largest

is the only one that is totally in the United States

Lake Huron (c) – is the third largest

Lake Erie (d) – at the very end of this lake is Niagara Falls

Lake Ontario (e)

These are the rest of the states that are **east** of the Mississippi.

These states are along the **north border** of the United States:

Maine (23) – east of New Hampshire

Vermont (14) – west of New Hampshire

Ohio (17) – touches Lake Erie

Michigan (26) – is split into two parts, and touches both sides of Lake Michigan

These states are on the **east bank** of the Mississippi River:

Wisconsin (30)

Illinois (21)

Kentucky (15)

Tennessee (16)

These states are on the **southern border** of the United States:

Mississippi (20)

Louisiana (18) – the only state that is on both sides of the Mississippi

Alabama (22) – also on the east bank of the Mississippi River

Florida (27)

These states are the last states **east** of the Mississippi River:

West Virginia (35)

Indiana (19)

Unit 2. WESTERN U.S.

All these states are **west** of the Mississippi River.

These states touch the **northern border** of the United States:

Minnesota (32)

North Dakota (19)

Montana (41)

Idaho (43)

Washington (42) – not the place where the president lives, which is called Washington, D.C.

These states are on the **west bank** of the Mississippi River:

Iowa (29)

Missouri (24)

Arkansas (25)

These states **border** Mexico to the south:

Texas (28)

New Mexico (47)

Arizona (48)

California (31)

Other states **west** of the Mississippi River:

South Dakota (40)

Nebraska (37)

Kansas (34)

Oklahoma (46)

Wyoming (44)

Colorado (38)

Utah (45)

Oregon (33)

Nevada (36)

These states do not touch any other states:

Alaska (49) – touches country of Canada

Hawaii (50) – made up of islands in the Pacific Ocean and last state to become part of U.S.

Unit 3. UNITED STATES AND BORDERS

Border places to the East, West, South and North

Atlantic Ocean (S) – east of almost all the original 13 states

Pacific Ocean (V) – west of California, Oregon, and Washington

Mexico (T) – country south of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California

Gulf of Mexico (Z) – southern body of water that goes from Florida to Texas

Canada (W) – country north of the United States

Washington, D.C. (X) – is the capital of the entire United States situated between Virginia and Maryland

State Abbreviation List

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----------------|----|----------------|----|
| Washington | WA | Idaho | ID | Montana | MT |
| North Dakota | ND | Minnesota | MN | Wisconsin | WI |
| Michigan | MI | Ohio | OH | Pennsylvania | PA |
| New York | NY | Vermont | VT | New Hampshire | NH |
| Maine | ME | Florida | FL | Alabama | AL |
| Mississippi | MS | Louisiana | LA | Texas | TX |
| New Mexico | NM | Arizona | AZ | California | CA |
| Iowa | IA | Illinois | IL | Missouri | MO |
| Kentucky | KY | Arkansas | AR | Tennessee | TN |
| Massachusetts | MA | Rhode Island | RI | Connecticut | CT |
| New Jersey | NJ | Delaware | DE | Maryland | MD |
| Virginia | VA | North Carolina | NC | South Carolina | SC |
| Georgia | GA | West Virginia | WV | Indiana | IN |
| South Dakota | SD | Nebraska | NE | Kansas | KS |
| Oklahoma | OK | Colorado | CO | Wyoming | WY |
| Utah | UT | Nevada | NV | Oregon | OR |



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