**Unless otherwise specified, "descriptions" referenced in the evidence statements could include but are not limited to written, oral, pictorial, and kinesthetic descriptions.*

MS-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-1. **Analyze and interpret data for patterns in the fossil record that document the existence, diversity, extinction, and change of life forms throughout the history of life on Earth under the assumption that natural laws operate today as in the past.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on finding patterns of changes in the level of complexity of anatomical structures in organisms and the chronological order of fossil appearance in the rock layers.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment does not include the names of individual species or geological eras in the fossil record.]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Analyzing and Interpreting Data
Analyzing data in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to extending quantitative analysis to investigations, distinguishing between correlation and causation, and basic statistical techniques of data and error analysis.

- Analyze and interpret data to determine similarities and differences in findings.

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Knowledge is Based on Empirical Evidence

- Science knowledge is based upon logical and conceptual connections between evidence and explanations.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.A: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity

- The collection of fossils and their placement in chronological order (e.g., through the location of the sedimentary layers in which they are found or through radioactive dating) is known as the fossil record. It documents the existence, diversity, extinction, and change of many life forms throughout the history of life on Earth.

Crosscutting Concepts

Patterns

- Graphs, charts, and images can be used to identify patterns in data.

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Knowledge Assumes an Order and Consistency in Natural Systems

- Science assumes that objects and events in natural systems occur in consistent patterns that are understandable through measurement and observation.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:

1	Organizing data		
	a	Students organize the given data (e.g., using tables, graphs, charts, images), including the appearance of specific types of fossilized organisms in the fossil record as a function of time, as determined by their locations in the sedimentary layers or the ages of rocks.	
	b	Students organize the data in a way that allows for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of similarities and differences in the data.	
2	Identifying relationships		
	a	Students identify:	
		i.	Patterns between any given set of sedimentary layers and the relative ages of those layers.
		ii.	The time period(s) during which a given fossil organism is present in the fossil record.
		iii.	Periods of time for which changes in the presence or absence of large numbers of organisms or specific types of organisms can be observed in the fossil record (e.g., a fossil layer with very few organisms immediately next to a fossil layer with many types of organisms).
		iv.	Patterns of changes in the level of complexity of anatomical structures in organisms in the fossil record, as a function of time.
3	Interpreting data		
	a	Students analyze and interpret the data to determine evidence for the existence, diversity, extinction, and change in life forms throughout the history of Earth, using the assumption that natural laws operate today as they would have in the past. Students use similarities and differences in the observed patterns to provide evidence for:	
		i.	When mass extinctions occurred.
		ii.	When organisms or types of organisms emerged, went extinct, or evolved.
		iii.	The long-term increase in the diversity and complexity of organisms on Earth.

MS-LS4-2 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-2. **Apply scientific ideas to construct an explanation for the anatomical similarities and differences among modern organisms and between modern and fossil organisms to infer evolutionary relationships.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on explanations of the evolutionary relationships among organisms in terms of similarity or differences of the gross appearance of anatomical structures.]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

Constructing explanations and designing solutions in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to include constructing explanations and designing solutions supported by multiple sources of evidence consistent with scientific ideas, principles, and theories.

- Apply scientific ideas to construct an explanation for real-world phenomena, examples, or events.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.A: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity

- Anatomical similarities and differences between various organisms living today and between them and organisms in the fossil record, enable the reconstruction of evolutionary history and the inference of lines of evolutionary descent.

Crosscutting Concepts

Patterns

- Patterns can be used to identify cause and effect relationships.

Connections to Nature of Science

Scientific Knowledge Assumes an Order and Consistency in Natural Systems

- Science assumes that objects and events in natural systems occur in consistent patterns that are understandable through measurement and observation.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:		
1	Articulating the explanation of phenomena	
	a	Students articulate a statement that relates a given phenomenon to scientific ideas, including the following ideas about similarities and differences in organisms and their evolutionary relationships:
		i. Anatomical similarities and differences among organisms can be used to infer evolutionary relationships, including:
		1. Among modern organisms.
		2. Between modern and fossil organisms.
	b	Students use evidence and reasoning to construct an explanation for the given phenomenon.
2	Evidence	
	a	Students identify and describe* evidence (e.g., from students' own investigations, observations, reading material, archived data, simulations) necessary for constructing the explanation, including similarities and differences in anatomical patterns in and between:
		i. Modern, living organisms (e.g., skulls of modern crocodiles, skeletons of birds; features of modern whales and elephants).
		ii. Fossilized organisms (e.g., skulls of fossilized crocodiles, fossilized dinosaurs).
3	Reasoning	
	a	Students use reasoning to connect the evidence to support an explanation. Students describe* the following chain of reasoning for the explanation:
		i. Organisms that share a pattern of anatomical features are likely to be more closely related than are organisms that do not share a pattern of anatomical features, due to the cause-and-effect relationship between genetic makeup and anatomy (e.g., although birds and insects both have wings, the organisms are structurally very different and not very closely related; the wings of birds and bats are structurally similar, and the organisms are more closely related; the limbs of horses and zebras are structurally very similar, and they are more closely related than are birds and bats or birds and insects).
		ii. Changes over time in the anatomical features observable in the fossil record can be used to infer lines of evolutionary descent by linking extinct organisms to living organisms through a series of fossilized organisms that share a basic set of anatomical features.

MS-LS4-3 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-3. **Analyze displays of pictorial data to compare patterns of similarities in the embryological development across multiple species to identify relationships not evident in the fully formed anatomy.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on inferring general patterns of relatedness among embryos of different organisms by comparing the macroscopic appearance of diagrams or pictures.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment of comparisons is limited to gross appearance of anatomical structures in embryological development.]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Analyzing and Interpreting Data
Analyzing data in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to extending quantitative analysis to investigations, distinguishing between correlation and causation, and basic statistical techniques of data and error analysis.

- Analyze displays of data to identify linear and nonlinear relationships.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.A: Evidence of Common Ancestry and Diversity

- Comparison of the embryological development of different species also reveals similarities that show relationships not evident in the fully-formed anatomy.

Crosscutting Concepts

Patterns

- Graphs, charts, and images can be used to identify patterns in data.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:		
1	Organizing data	
	a	Students organize the given displays of pictorial data of embryos by developmental stage and by organism (e.g., early, middle, just prior to birth) to allow for the identification, analysis, and interpretation of relationships in the data.
2	Identifying relationships	
	a	Students analyze their organized pictorial displays to identify linear and nonlinear relationships, including:
		i. Patterns of similarities in embryos across species (e.g., early mammal embryos and early fish embryos both contain gill slits, whale embryos and the embryos of land animals — even some snakes — have hind limbs).
		ii. Patterns of changes as embryos develop (e.g., mammal embryos lose their gill slits, but the gill slits develop into gills in fish).
3	Interpreting data	
	a	Students use patterns of similarities and changes in embryo development to describe* evidence for relatedness among apparently diverse species, including similarities that are not evident in the fully formed anatomy (e.g., mammals and fish are more closely related than they appear to be based on their adult features, whales are related to land animals).

MS-LS4-4 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-4. **Construct an explanation based on evidence that describes how genetic variations of traits in a population increase some individuals' probability of surviving and reproducing in a specific environment.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on using simple probability statements and proportional reasoning to construct explanations.]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions

Constructing explanations and designing solutions in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to include constructing explanations and designing solutions supported by multiple sources of evidence consistent with scientific ideas, principles, and theories.

- Construct an explanation that includes qualitative or quantitative relationships between variables that describe phenomena.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.B: Natural Selection

- Natural selection leads to the predominance of certain traits in a population, and the suppression of others.

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Phenomena may have more than one cause, and some cause and effect relationships in systems can only be described using probability.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:			
1	Articulating the explanation for phenomena		
	a	Students articulate a statement that relates the given phenomenon to scientific ideas about the cause-and-effect relationship between the inheritance of traits increasing the chances of successful reproduction and natural selection.	
	b	Students use evidence and reasoning to construct an explanation for the given phenomenon.	
2	Evidence		
	a	Students identify and describe* given evidence (e.g., from students' own investigations, observations, reading materials, archived data) necessary for constructing the explanation, including:	
		i.	Individuals in a species have genetic variation that can be passed on to their offspring.
		ii.	The probability of a specific organism surviving and reproducing in a specific environment.
		iii.	The traits (i.e., specific variations of a characteristic) and the cause-and-effect relationships between those traits and the probability of survival and reproduction of a given organism in a specific environment.
		iv.	The particular genetic variations (associated with those traits) that are carried by that organism.
3	Reasoning		
	a	Students use reasoning to connect the evidence and support an explanation that describes* the relationship between genetic variation and the success of organisms in a specific environment. Students describe* a chain of reasoning that includes:	
		i.	Any population in a given environment contains a variety of available, inheritable genetic traits.
		ii.	For a specific environment (e.g., different environments may have limited food availability, predators, nesting site availability, light availability), some traits confer advantages that make it more probable that an organism will be able to survive and reproduce there.
		iii.	In a population, there is a cause-and-effect relationship between the variation of traits and the probability that specific organisms will be able to survive and reproduce.
		iv.	Variation of traits is a result of genetic variations occurring in the population.
		v.	The proportion of individual organisms that have genetic variations and traits that are advantageous in a particular environment will increase from generation to generation due to

			natural selection because the probability that those individuals will survive and reproduce is greater.
		vi.	Similarly, the proportion of individual organisms that have genetic variations and traits that are disadvantageous in a particular environment will be less likely to survive, and the disadvantageous traits will decrease from generation to generation due to natural selection.

MS-LS4-5 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-5. **Gather and synthesize information about the technologies that have changed the way humans influence the inheritance of desired traits in organisms.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on synthesizing information from reliable sources about the influence of humans on genetic outcomes in artificial selection (such as genetic modification, animal husbandry, gene therapy); and, on the impacts these technologies have on society as well as the technologies leading to these scientific discoveries.]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information

Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to evaluating the merit and validity of ideas and methods.

- Gather, read, and synthesize information from multiple appropriate sources and assess the credibility, accuracy, and possible bias of each publication and methods used, and describe how they are supported or not supported by evidence.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.B: Natural Selection

- In *artificial* selection, humans have the capacity to influence certain characteristics of organisms by selective breeding. One can choose desired parental traits determined by genes, which are then passed on to offspring.

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Phenomena may have more than one cause, and some cause and effect relationships in systems can only be described using probability.

Connections to Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science

Interdependence of Science, Engineering, and Technology

- Engineering advances have led to important discoveries in virtually every field of science, and scientific discoveries have led to the development of entire industries and engineered systems.

Connections to Nature of Science

Science Addresses Questions About the Natural and Material World

- Scientific knowledge can describe the consequences of actions but does not necessarily prescribe the decisions that society takes.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:		
1	Obtaining information	
	a	Students gather information about at least two technologies that have changed the way humans influence the inheritance of desired traits in plants and animals through artificial selection by choosing desired parental traits determined by genes, which are then often passed on to offspring. Examples could include gene therapy, genetic modification, and selective breeding of plants and animals.
	b	Students use at least two appropriate and reliable sources of information for investigating each technology.
2	Evaluating information	
	a	Students assess the credibility, accuracy, and possible bias of each publication and method used in the information they gather.
	b	Students use their knowledge of artificial selection and additional sources to describe* how the information they gather is or is not supported by evidence.

	c	Students synthesize the information from multiple sources to provide examples of how technologies have changed the ways that humans are able to influence the inheritance of desired traits in organisms.
	d	Students use the information to identify and describe* how a better understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in how traits occur in organisms has led to advances in technology that provide a higher probability of being able to influence the inheritance of desired traits in organisms.

MS-LS4-6 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

Students who demonstrate understanding can:

MS-LS4-6. **Use mathematical representations to support explanations of how natural selection may lead to increases and decreases of specific traits in populations over time.** [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on using mathematical models, probability statements, and proportional reasoning to support explanations of trends in changes to populations over time.] [*Assessment Boundary: Assessment does not include Hardy Weinberg calculations.*]

The performance expectation above was developed using the following elements from the NRC document *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*:

Science and Engineering Practices

Using Mathematics and Computational Thinking

Mathematical and computational thinking in 6–8 builds on K–5 experiences and progresses to identifying patterns in large data sets and using mathematical concepts to support explanations and arguments.

- Use mathematical representations to support scientific conclusions and design solutions.

Disciplinary Core Ideas

LS4.C: Adaptation

- Adaptation by natural selection acting over generations is one important process by which species change over time in response to changes in environmental conditions. Traits that support successful survival and reproduction in the new environment become more common; those that do not become less common. Thus, the distribution of traits in a population changes.

Crosscutting Concepts

Cause and Effect

- Phenomena may have more than one cause, and some cause and effect relationships in systems can only be described using probability.

Observable features of the student performance by the end of the course:		
1	Representation	
	a	Students identify the explanations for phenomena that they will support, which include:
		i. Characteristics of a species change over time (i.e., over generations) through adaptation by natural selection in response to changes in environmental conditions.
		ii. Traits that better support survival and reproduction in a new environment become more common within a population within that environment.
		iii. Traits that do not support survival and reproduction as well become less common within a population in that environment.
		iv. When environmental shifts are too extreme, populations do not have time to adapt and may become extinct.
	b	From given mathematical and/or computational representations of phenomena, students identify the relevant components, including:
		i. Population changes (e.g., trends, averages, histograms, graphs, spreadsheets) gathered from historical data or simulations.
		ii. The distribution of specific traits over time from data and/or simulations.
		iii. Environmental conditions (e.g., climate, resource availability) over time from data and/or simulations.
2	Mathematical Modeling	
	a	Students use the given mathematical and/or computational representations (e.g., trends, averages, histograms, graphs, spreadsheets) of the phenomenon to identify relationships in the data and/or simulations, including:
		i. Changes and trends over time in the distribution of traits within a population.
		ii. Multiple cause-and-effect relationships between environmental conditions and natural selection in a population.
		iii. The increases or decreases of some traits within a population can have more than one environmental cause.
3	Analysis	
	a	Students analyze the mathematical and/or computational representations to provide and describe* evidence that distributions of traits in populations change over time in response to changes in

		environmental conditions. Students synthesize their analysis together with scientific information about natural selection to describe* that species adapt through natural selection. This results in changes in the distribution of traits within a population and in the probability that any given organism will carry a particular trait.
	b	Students use the analysis of the mathematical and/or computational representations (including proportional reasoning) as evidence to support the explanations that:
		i. Through natural selection, traits that better support survival and reproduction are more common in a population than those traits that are less effective.
		ii. Populations are not always able to adapt and survive because adaptation by natural selection occurs over generations.
	c	Based on their analysis, students describe* that because there are multiple cause-and-effect relationships contributing to the phenomenon, for each different cause it is not possible to predict with 100% certainty what will happen.