**The Importance of Earth Science Education K-12 developed by the National Earth Science Teachers Association (March 1987)**

Earth Science plays a unique and essential role in today's rapidly changing world. It is an integrated study of the Earth's history, composition, and structure, its atmosphere and oceans, and its environment in space. Knowledge of Earth Science is important because most human activities are related to interaction with the planet Earth. Basic knowledge about the Earth, then, is the key to development of an informed citizenry.

The reasons for teaching Earth Science are numerous: it offers experience in a diverse range of interrelated scientific disciplines; it is closely related to the student's natural surroundings and offers students subject matter which has direct application to their lives and the world around them. They need only step outdoors to observe and find relevance in concepts learned in the Earth Science classroom.

Because it offers many opportunities to collect data, hypothesize, experiment, and draw conclusions, both with school and in outside environments, Earth Science is a laboratory and activity oriented course. Earth Science integrates many principles of both physical and life sciences. It incorporates and presents concepts often not emphasized in other parts of the science curriculum, such as geologic time and the vastness of space. The teaching of Earth Science allows all students to have a better science background with pertinent information about their surroundings.

Daily society is faced with environmental and economic concerns such as acid rain, water supply, the greenhouse effect, and waste disposal. Civilization is absolutely dependent upon utilization of Earth's energy, mineral, and human resources. Awareness of natural phenomena such as floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, volcanoes and earthquakes requires knowledge of Earth Science. Students who study Earth Science are better prepared to discuss issues and make informed, responsible decisions.

The interdisciplinary curriculum of Earth Science develops and builds on skills learned in earlier grades and closely relates to the student's everyday experiences. It develops attitudes and problem-solving skills that will be useful throughout life. If tomorrow's adults are to make wise decisions about Earth and environmental issues, it is vital that today's students be given the opportunity to study Earth Science at all levels as an integrated part of their education as well as an invaluable part of their high school experience.

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