

Discovering Life Science

is also a good fit for teachers seeking a book that incorporates ...

The Importance of Optimism

In an honest, but positive manner, Discovering Life Science informs young people of historical and recent events related to biology - including those that threaten the planet - particularly pollution and global warming. However, students learn that science, when practiced thoughtfully, is a means to make things better. They also are encouraged to believe that the actions of individuals are vital.

A Fact-based Approach

Topics like evolution, humanity's influence on global warming, variations in gender identity, and data-driven advances in medicine (such as vaccines), are presented as facts, not opinions.

Up-to-date material

While a middle school text is certainly not the place for in-depth explanations of complex biological information, this book does introduce students to terms such as COVID-19, mRNA vaccines, CRISPR, in vitro fertilization, stem cells, genetically modified organisms (such as GMO foods), genetically engineered organs for transplantation, and endosymbiosis.

A Focus on Diversity - Racial / Ethnic / Gender

The book on which Discovering Life Science was based set a high bar with its inclusion of content and images that portray society as multicultural, and its praise for the contributions by minorities and women. Discovering Life Science continues, and extends, this tradition.

The important work of people of color like Angela Ferguson, Ernest Just, and Charles Drew is applauded. Besides Dr. Ferguson, women scientists in the book include Rachel Carson, Emmanuelle Charpentier, Jennifer Doudna, Rosalind Franklin, Jane Goodall, Barbara McClintock, Lynn Margulis, Valerie Pence, Florence Sabin, and Suzanne Simard. A complete list of the scientists mentioned in the book is included in this guide.

In a lesson on the genetic determination of gender, students are told that some people identify as genders that don't match their biology, and some people consider themselves to be non-binary.

So ... Is this a textbook or a workbook?

It is actually somewhat of a hybrid. The book is available only in paperback, but the format is definitely one of a textbook, with review questions after each short lesson. A teacher might opt (as I did) to spot check students' answers, and to allocate a portion of their grade for this work.

Ideally, each child will be provided their own book; in this way students may underline, make notes in the margins and, of course, complete the review questions. However, for teachers with tighter budgets, students could be required to put their answers on looseleaf paper, thereby keeping the books 'clean' for use in future years. For the book to last for multiple years, it is highly recommended that the pages be removed, hole-punched, and kept in three-ring binders.