Intra-cyclothem conodont δ¹⁸O: Insights into climatic forcing of seawater chemistry during the Late Paleozoic Ice Age

GRiffin, J.¹, BATES, S.², MONTAÑEZ, I.¹, POULSEN, C.² and LYONS, T.³

¹University of California – Davis, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, 1 Shields Avenue, Davis, CA 95616, USA (*correspondence: jmgriffin@ucdavis.edu)
²University of California – Riverside, Department of Earth Sciences, 900 University Avenue, Riverside, CA 92521, USA
³University of Michigan, Earth and Environmental Sciences, 1100 North University Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA

We present intra-cyclothem, high-spatial (dm) resolution oxygen isotope (δ¹⁸O) records for further investigation of climatic controls of the δ¹⁸O proxy during the Late Paleozoic. Conodonts from Pennsylvanian cyclothems of Arrow Canyon, NV and the USA Midcontinent basin provided the phosphate source used to construct the δ¹⁸O records. Conodont yield (conodonts/kg of limestone) was maximized by using 7% acetic acid buffered to pH 3.6 for dissolution, thus enabling the high-spatial resolution records. Sample sizes of < 1 mg of bioapatite produced values with a precision as low as 0.1 ‰ (1σ), achieved by use of a refined conversion technique (buffered silver amine) and new pyrolysis system (Elementar’s Pyrocube). The records reveal shifts in conodont δ¹⁸O at a higher-frequency than sea-level changes inferred from facies stacking patterns. These results contradict recent interpretations of intra-cyclothem conodont δ¹⁸O records, which attribute the full range of values, minus a few tenths of a per-mil for temperature change, to variability in seawater δ¹⁸O due to the waxing and waning of ice sheets. The high-frequency variability in conodont δ¹⁸O, which can be as much as 1.5‰ over ~10 cm with no distinct facies change, are distinct in temporal scale from eccentricity-paced (10⁵ yr) changes in glacioeustasy. Recent climate models of the late Paleozoic indicate precessional-scale (10⁴ yr) variability in hydrologic cycling across tropical Pangea that could have significantly altered the δ¹⁸O of seawater. These systematic changes in epicontinental seawater composition should be recorded in conodont δ¹⁸O and are hypothesized here to be responsible for the high-frequency shifts revealed in these Pennsylvanian δ¹⁸O records from paleo-equatorial marine deposits.