

PA Core Standards Teacher Fact Sheet

WHAT ARE THE PENNSYLVANIA CORE STANDARDS?

The State Board adopted Common Core Standards in July 2010. Since that time, the decision was made to craft a set of Pennsylvania (PA) Core Standards tailored to meet our state specific needs in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as for Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science/Technical Subjects. A group of Pennsylvania educators crafted the PA Core Standards, which mirror the academic rigor of the Common Core State Standards, are attainable for students, practicable for teachers and districts, and reflect the organization and design of the PA Academic Standards.

In compliance with Chapter 4 (§4.11), Pennsylvania's Core Standards are a set of rigorous, high-quality academic expectations in English Language arts (ELA) and mathematics that all students should master by the end of each grade level. The PA Core Standards are robust and relevant to the real world and reflect the knowledge and skills our young people need to succeed in life after high school, in both post-secondary education and a globally competitive workforce.

WHAT DO THE PA CORE STANDARDS MEAN FOR ME?

Transitioning from existing state standards to the PA Core Standards impacts curriculum and instruction in schools.

- PA Core Standards represents a real shift in instructional intent from high school completion to college-and career readiness for every student. A clear understanding of the instructional shifts and rigorous demands of PA Core Standards is essential.
- The new standards set a benchmark of at least 50 percent nonfiction reading for elementary school students, and at least 75 percent nonfiction reading for high school students. Therefore, more non-fiction text will be incorporated into the curriculum. You need to assess what non-fiction resources you immediately have available to support your curriculum; then, begin to fill in the gaps you identify. In addition, it is important for you to have a thorough understanding of integrating non-fiction text into instruction and teaching reading strategies with non-fiction text.
- PA Core Standards require students to demonstrate mastery of content, which cannot be acquired solely through lecture. Therefore, classroom instruction must focus less on teacher talk and more on actively engaging students. When planning instruction, design lessons that actively engage students in learning.
- PA Core Standards emphasize application and higher-order thinking skills. The instruction that is planned should require students to apply their skills

PA Core Standards Teacher Fact Sheet

and thinking at the Analysis, Evaluation, and Synthesis levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

- When PA Core Standards are fully implemented, you will see that each grade covers fewer topics, but teaches content in much greater depth.
- The coherent progression of the PA Core Standards demands increased vertical articulation K-12.
- Focus is more heavily on individual areas in mathematics as opposed to covering a wide variety of concepts. By concentrating on a smaller number of important areas, students will develop enough understanding to move on to more advanced topics as grade levels progress.
- With PA Core Standards in place, there is more opportunity to network with others across the state so share experiences related to best practices.

| PA CORE SHIFTS | |
|---|---|
| ELA/LITERACY | MATHEMATICS |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. 2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational text. 3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus strongly where the Standards focus. 2. Coherence: Think across grades, and link to major topics within grades. 3. Rigor: In major topics pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application with equal intensity. |

IMPLEMENTING THE PA CORE STANDARDS:

The PA Department of Education worked with state teachers and curriculum experts to develop a **model curriculum** that schools may **voluntarily** use if they wish. The PA Department of Education continues to provide educational resources through the Standards Aligned System (www.pde.sas.org). Information and resources related to PA Core Standards are located in the Standards, Assessment, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, and Materials & Resources section of the website. Currently, state assessments are being developed that align to the PA Core Standards. Because these standards are more rigorous than the previous state standards,

PA Core Standards Teacher Fact Sheet

Pennsylvania has the following implementation schedule for the PA Core Standards aligned assessments:

- Students in grades 3 – 8 will continue to be assessed using the current PSSA, which will include PA Core standard related questions **ONLY** if the PA Academic Standard and PA Core Standard are similar. In 2015, students in these grades will be assessed on the PA Core Standards.
- PA has replaced the 11th grade PSSA with end of course exams in Algebra 1, Literature, and Biology with Keystone Exams. They have been aligned to the PA Core Standards.
- Although Keystone Exams were given during the 2012-13 school year, it is not until the 2016-17 school year that students must score at least “proficient” on these exams in order to graduate. Pennsylvania has developed an alternative means for some students to demonstrate proficiency on the PA Core Standards, if needed.
- Pennsylvania has developed an online testing option that is available to schools for both the PSSA and Keystone Exams; however, completing the test online is not a requirement.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO NOW?

For a smooth transition to the new standards, teachers can make changes to instruction that will prepare students for PA Core Standards while helping them succeed on current state assessments and:

- **Inform colleagues and parents** of the PA Core Standards.
- **Learn** how your school is transitioning to the PA Core Standards and assume an active role in the transition.
- **Review instructional materials and curriculum** for alignment to the PA Core.
- Assess your **professional development needs** and begin to seek out and participate in such opportunities.

In English Language Arts:

- ⇒ Incorporate into instruction more **text dependent questions** that require students to read a text closely to determine what it says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.

PA Core Standards Teacher Fact Sheet

⇒ Have students read more **non-fiction** and **complex texts**.

⇒ Focus writing instruction substantially on **writing to inform** and structure an **argument**, not only writing stories.

In Mathematics:

⇒ Focus instruction more on the **few key topics** emphasized in each grade in the standards.

⇒ Emphasize **problem-solving** and **real-world application**.

TEACHER RESOURCES

PA Core Standards Fact Sheet for Teachers (pdf)

[PA Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#)

[PA Standards Aligned System](#)

[Pennsylvania State Assessment System](#)

[PSSA](#)

[Keystone Exams](#)