

PA Core Standards Leadership 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 represent a real shift in instructional intent from high school completion to college-and-career readiness for every student.
- PA Core Standards require students to demonstrate mastery of content, which cannot be acquired solely through lecture. Provide professional growth opportunities emphasizing the design and delivery of instruction that engages students in learning as well as provides you with the “look fors” when observing instruction.
- PA Core Standards emphasize application and higher-order thinking skills. Can you recognize high-order thinking skills when observing instruction? Assess your professional growth needs in order to lead your teachers through the implementation of the instructional shifts and the rigorous demands of the PA Core Standards; then, develop a plan to address the needs.
- PA Core Standards at each grade may cover fewer topics; yet, content is taught in much greater depth. Monitor curriculum and instruction to assure the content is taught at the depth required by PA Core Standards.

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- The coherent progression of the PA Core Standards demands increased vertical articulation K-12.
- With the standards in place, districts and teachers can now share best practices more efficiently across states. Engage in opportunities to network with others in leadership positions to take advantage of opportunities to share best practices.

PA CORE STANDARDS SHIFTS	
ELA/LITERACY	MATHEMATICS
<p>1. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.</p> <p>2. Reading, writing and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational text.</p> <p>3. Regular practice with complex text and its academic language.</p>	<p>1. Focus strongly where the Standards focus.</p> <p>2. Coherence: Think across grades, and link to major topics within grades.</p> <p>3. Rigor: In major topics pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application with equal intensity.</p>

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, 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.

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- PA has replaced the 11th grade PSSA with end of course exams in Algebra 1, Literature, and Biology. These exams are called 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 LEADERSHIP DO NOW?

The PA Core standards will be fully implemented in Pennsylvania by 2014-2015 and the PSSA's will be aligned to PA Core Standards. In the meantime, districts can make changes to curriculum and instruction that prepare students for the PA Core while helping them succeed on current state assessments. In order to lay the groundwork for a smooth transition to the new standards, district/school leadership can ...

- **Inform teachers, school board members and parents** of the PA Core standards.
- **Establish school leadership implementation teams** to plan how your district/school will transition to fully implement the PA Core Standards.
- Begin to **review instructional materials and curriculum** for alignment to the PA Core Standards.
- Assess **professional development needs** and begin to provide opportunities for teachers to align their instruction to the rigor of PA Core Standards.
- Assess the engagement of students in more rigorous learning
- Identify grade levels/content areas that are at the forefront of implementation of Pa Core Standards.
- Determine how to address struggling learners.

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- Connect with faculty at the local community colleges or universities regarding the expectations for entry-level college courses to see if your district's expectations align with what students need after graduation.

In English Language Arts:

Develop a **birth-12 literacy plan** based on the assessed needs of students. The literacy plan should include an emphasis on close reading, increased text complexity through the grades, informational text, argumentative writing, academic vocabulary, the use of high-order questioning, as well as listening and speaking skills.

Provide professional development to assist teachers with:

- ⇒ Incorporating into instruction more **text-dependent questions** requiring students to read a text closely to determine what it says explicitly; then, make logical inferences.
- ⇒ Integrating more **nonfiction** and **complex texts** into classroom instruction.
- ⇒ **Writing to inform and strategies for structuring an argument.**

In Mathematics:

Provide professional development to:

- ⇒ Strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills in *The Standards for Mathematical Practices*.
<http://www.corestandards.org/math/practice>
- ⇒ Provide strategies and techniques related to **problem-solving** and **real-world application**.

LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

PA Core Standards Fact Sheet for Leadership (pdf)

[PA Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#)

[PA Standards Aligned System](#)

[Pennsylvania State Assessment System](#)

[PSSA](#)

[Keystone Exams](#)