

STANDARDS ALIGNED SYSTEM (SAS) IN PENNSYLVANIA

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The Pennsylvania Standards Aligned System (SAS) is a collaborative product of research and good practice that identifies six distinct elements which, if utilized together, will provide schools and districts a common framework for continuous school and district enhancement and improvement.

Much research has been conducted as to what makes a great school. There are many intangible components; however, research supports the notion that great schools and school systems tend to have six common elements that ensure student achievement: Standards, Assessments, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, Materials & Resources, and Safe and Supportive Schools.

Standards

Pennsylvania's Academic Standards define what students should know and be able to do as a result of instruction.

Curriculum Framework

The Curriculum Framework identifies the Big Ideas, Concepts, Competencies, Essential Questions, Key Vocabulary and Exemplars in each subject area.

- **Big Ideas:** Declarative statements that describe concepts that transcend grade levels. Big Ideas are essential to provide focus on specific content for all students.
- **Concepts:** Describe what students should know (key knowledge) as a result of this instruction specific to grade level.
- **Competencies:** Describe what students should be able to do, key skills, as a result of this instruction, specific to grade level.
- **Essential Questions:** Questions connected to the SAS framework and are specifically linked to the Big Ideas. They should frame student inquiry, promote critical thinking, and assist in learning transfer.
- **Vocabulary:** Key terminology linked to the Standards, Big Ideas, Concepts and Competencies in a specific content area and grade level.
- **Exemplars:** Performance tasks that can be used for assessment and instruction as well as professional development. An Exemplar is an example of student work that meets the

identified criteria for the task. Exemplars provide educators with a concrete example of assessing students' understanding of the Big Ideas, Concepts and Competencies.

Materials and Resources

Materials and Resources support standards aligned instruction and include Voluntary Model Curriculum, learning progressions, units, lesson plans and multi media content examples for use in planning and delivering instruction.

- Materials and Resources includes the Voluntary Model Curriculum (VMC) incorporating learning progressions, units, lesson plans, and content resources aligned to the Pennsylvania Standards in curriculum frameworks for the four major content areas (mathematics, science, social studies, reading-writing-speaking-listening).
 - Learning progressions span grades K-12 and include what all students should know and be able to do as a result of successfully moving through grades K-8 and by taking specific courses in grades 9-12.
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Assessment

Assessment offers tools and resources to support the process of assessing, evaluating and documenting student learning in order to improve professional practice and increase student achievement. Four types of assessments are defined in PA:

- **Summative Assessment:** Seeks to make an overall judgment of progress made at the end of a defined period of instruction.
 - **Formative Assessment:** Defined as classroom-based assessments that allow teachers to monitor and adjust their instructional practices in order to meet the individual needs of their students.
 - **Diagnostic Assessment:** Ascertains, prior to instruction, each student's strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills.
 - **Benchmark Assessment:** Measures achievement of important grade level content periodically during the year in order to provide feedback about how students.
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Instruction

Instruction provides resources and interventions to facilitate achievement of the standards for all students.

Safe and Supportive Schools

Safe and Supportive Schools supplies resources and exemplars to promote active student engagement in a safe and positive learning environment. Areas within the element include the following:

- **Engagement:** Interpersonal relationships, respect for diversity and participation in school
 - **Safety:** Emotional safety, physical safety, and substance use
 - **Environment:** Physical environment, academic environment, wellness, and disciplinary environment
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Standards Aligned System Contact Information:

Ed Vollbrecht, Ph.D., Director, Bureau of Teaching and Learning Support at ra_sas@state.pa.us, Phone: 717-783-9530; Fax: 717-783-3946; TTY: 717-783-8445

More information on the Standards Aligned System can be found on the Education Hub on the PDE website at: www.education.state.pa.us.