



## **PaSLP Guiding Principle 1**

### **Guiding Principle 1: Literacy as a Critical Foundation for All Learning**

Literacy is a critical foundation for all learning. Being fully literate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires that students read, write, and communicate at high levels to construct meaning from and across multiple sources, including print and non-print, and to communicate ideas orally and in writing. Schools must prepare students to develop the complex literacy skills they need to be future ready, to make meaningful contributions to society, and to enjoy personal fulfillment. Literacy, an important skill, and tool for learning, requires instruction and support from birth-grade 12.

Literacy expectations and demands have increased given 21<sup>st</sup> century societal changes and challenges. These changes include:

- More jobs will require some postsecondary education, and this expectation will require that graduates be able to read and comprehend challenging content and apply their reading to problem solving (Haynes, 2011).
- Increased use of technology for communication and learning is changing the way we read, write, teach, and learn. Today's students are surrounded by technology; they think and learn in different ways (Coiro, 2009; ISTE, 2016 [www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org)). Technology is, therefore, not only changing the way that students learn, but the nature of teaching in schools.
- Because of increased access to communication via technology, students will need to have a greater sense of themselves as members of the global community. They will need language and literacy skills that enable them to compete successfully in an economy that is influenced by world events. Graduates will also need a deeper understanding of and appreciation for people of various cultures.
- Too many students, especially those of color, drop out of high school or fail to qualify for admission to or graduate from institutions of higher learning. Further, "the percentage of young adults ages 18 to 19 neither enrolled in school nor working was higher for those from poor families than for their peers from nonpoor families" (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2016). All students must have opportunities to learn, access to quality teachers and teaching, and the academic support needed to increase the numbers of graduates who are college and career ready (Haynes, 2011). In other words, as acknowledged in the revised Position Statement by the International Reading Association's Commission on Adolescent Literacy, (2012):

"Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations, so they can create the world of the future" (p. 3).



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### **Shifts in Literacy Instruction**

As mentioned previously, although literacy can be defined simply as the ability to read and write, it is much more than that. In the past decade, several key shifts have occurred in the ways that literacy is taught and learned in schools. These include:

- An emphasis on the interrelationships of all the language arts and the importance of integrating instruction to facilitate growth in all areas (e.g., developing oral language skills of young children to influence later reading achievement).
- The importance of literacy instruction from a child's early years through adulthood. This shift illustrates the importance of working with families or caregivers and preschools, and the need to support literacy learning for students in secondary schools.
- The value of reading both literary and informational texts from early years through secondary school. Exposure to informational text helps students develop the academic vocabulary and conceptual knowledge they need for later learning in the content areas.
- The importance of literacy as an important tool for learning in the disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012; Moje, 2015).
- A focus on teaching students to effectively use a wide variety of digital tools for learning and communication and providing teachers with the professional learning experiences they need to use the tools of technology to better meet the needs of students (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013; Coiro, 2015).

### **The Science of Reading**

Not only have there been shifts in how literacy is defined and taught, there have also been important scientific findings that have contributed to an understanding of reading development and acquisition. Given research in cognitive science and neuroscience, there has been significant progress made toward understanding the acquisition of reading skills, the brain bases of reading, the causes of reading difficulties, and effective interventions (Dehaene, 2013; Perfetti, 2013; Seidenberg, 2016; Vellutino, Tunmer, Jaccard, & Chen, 2007). The information gained from this research provides an important and defensible foundation for the design and delivery of effective instruction for students and especially for those who experience difficulty learning to read. As defined by Gough and Tunmer (1986) in their *Simple View of Reading*, reading comprehension can be considered the product of decoding or word recognition and linguistic or listening comprehension. Both factors are important to the development of reading proficiency. Key contributors to word recognition are: phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. Language comprehension processes and skills include background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal reasoning, language structures, and literacy knowledge. While both word recognition and language comprehension account for variability in reading comprehension, unique contributions change over time with word recognition making the more significant impact on reading comprehension for emergent and novice readers. As word recognition abilities increase, language comprehension is the more significant contributor to reading comprehension. Kim (2017) conducted a study in which she combined the components of the *Simple View of Reading* (word reading and listening comprehension) with the component skills of text comprehension into a combined framework, i.e. the direct and indirect effects model of reading (DIER). In *Why the Simple View of Reading Is Not Simplistic: Unpacking Component*



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*Skills of Reading Using a Direct and Indirect Effect Model of Reading (DIER)*, Kim (2017) stated, “the present findings and the DIER model are also in line with the Reading Systems framework by Perfetti and his colleagues (Perfetti, 1999; Perfetti et al., 2005; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014), according to which, knowledge about orthographic system and linguistic system is necessary for reading comprehension, and both systems have its own processes, which interact and influence each other” (p. 326). Perfetti and Stafura (2013) in their *Reading Systems Framework* provided a general framework that describes the many components of reading and informs thinking about reading expertise and reading problems. In Guiding Principle 5, information about what teachers need to know and be able to do to teach literacy effectively is described. In Essential Element 1, additional information is provided about specific approaches or methods for teaching students to read, given these research findings.

The Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan can serve as a tool to promote effective literacy learning that will enable students to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It highlights the importance of developing the skills of literacy, especially in the early grades where there needs to be a focus on oral language and foundational skills (Book Handling, Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency) as described in the PA Core Standards. In addition, it addresses an individual’s ability to use literacy to function in society, achieve goals, and develop knowledge and potential. In the Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan, all the language arts—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—are considered essential capabilities of literate adults. Moreover, the plan addresses the need to prepare citizens who can successfully engage in a diverse, quickly changing world.

Teachers of content have a shared responsibility to understand how literacy affects learning of their disciplines and how they can use literacy instruction to strengthen students’ learning in their classrooms. The Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan highlights the importance of helping students gain the competence with literacy that enables them to apply their skills in authentic situations, both in and out of school. As Schmoker (2011), indicated, “authentic literacy is integral to both what and how we teach” (p. 11). Literacy is, in fact, the “spine” that holds everything together (Phillips & Wong, 2010).

To meet the complex challenges expected of graduates of Pennsylvania schools, the Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan identifies Recommendations for Action for those involved with improving literacy learning of students.