



PaSLP Essential Element 1

Essential Element 1: Standards

Literacy programs (birth-grade 12) require a well-articulated, coherent set of goals based on PDE standards. Articulation is needed between all levels, but especially at important transition points, (i.e., pre-school to kindergarten; elementary school to middle school; and middle school to secondary school). Such programs also require an understanding that there is a reciprocal relationship among the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), and that each contributes to the learning of the others. Moreover, successful learning of complex information in the disciplines requires the meaningful integration of literacy experiences (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening).

Rationale

Importance of standards to guide curriculum and instruction. Research evidence has contributed to a deeper understanding of how to improve student learning and overall literacy achievement in schools (Levine & Lezotte, 1990, Scheerens & Bosker, 1997, Marzano, 2000; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppesc, & Easton, 2010; Taylor, 2015). Although there are many factors that contribute to student learning (e.g., monitoring student work, parental involvement, and school climate), one of the factors highlighted in these various research reports is the importance of a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” (Marzano, 2003, p. 22). Essential goals and content for all students should be identified; moreover, these goals should enable all students to gain the necessary skills of “a literate person in the twenty-first century” (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSS], 2010, p. 3). Standards provide schools with necessary information for identifying what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level. These end-of-year expectations provide school districts with a defined cumulative progression of literacy skills. The PA Learning Standards for Infants and Toddlers, PA Learning Standards for English Language Arts (Pre K to 5), PA Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12), PA Core Standards for Reading in Science and Technical Subjects, and the PA Core Standards for Reading in History and Social Studies adopted by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education (SBE) provide critical resources for identifying increasingly challenging content relevant for developing the literacy curriculum. These standards provide key information about the importance of providing a rigorous curriculum with high expectations, including the use of complex materials in the classroom, especially informational texts, in both English language arts classrooms and in the academic disciplines.

“In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial. Continual instruction beyond the early grades is needed.” — International Reading Association (Moore et al., 1999, p. 3)

High levels of literacy are needed for adolescents to “achieve their potentials, reach their personal goals, and build a better society.” (ILA, 2012, p. 13)



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Alignment and articulation

At the same time, individual districts and schools must take into consideration their local context—including teacher knowledge, student needs, district curriculum, systems, structures, processes and resources—to make decisions about how to meet or address the standards. By reviewing standards and discussing how they can be used to develop both curriculum and instructional practices, districts can develop a plan for literacy that is coherent and articulated across the grades. Too often, teachers in schools make independent decisions about how, and to what extent, material should be covered. As indicated by researchers who study school reform (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Taylor, 2015), such inconsistent practices create learning gaps for students. Some topics or skills are addressed by individual teachers and omitted by others; some teachers have different expectations about what students should learn, or student assignments in various classrooms differ in their level of challenge or difficulty. By using a well-articulated set of goals with a coherent set of instructional practices, districts and schools can create equal opportunities for access to a challenging literacy curriculum for all students.

An integrated model

As highlighted in the PA Core Standards (2014), the processes of communication are closely connected; thus, teachers can more effectively and efficiently develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills by taking advantage of these connections. Students can write about what they read; they can also discuss (speak and listen) with others their responses to various selections. At early levels, students can read what they have written and use these experiences for developing a sense of the alphabetic principle and the importance of reading as a meaning-making endeavor. Integration is essential, not only to promote learning of the language arts skills themselves, but also as a means of enhancing learning in the academic content fields.

In the following sections, the foci of instruction for Birth-age 5, Grades K-5, and Grades 6-12 for the English Language Arts, including Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Language are identified in **summary form**. In the implications sections, resources are identified, including specific standards documents adopted by the SBE, and additional ideas for instructional practice.



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READING

SUMMARY

Reading: Focus of Instruction

Birth to Age 5

- Early development of essential competencies, listed below, enhances and enriches the development of “conventional literacy skills” in the years before formal schooling begins. • Experiences with oral language, engagement in listening and speaking, development of print concepts, and book awareness provide the consistent repetitions of early concepts needed to become a reader.
- Phonological awareness is an important building block that leads to successful reading.
- Experiences that build world and word (vocabulary) knowledge of preschoolers serve as a fundamental building block.
- Beginning readers use a variety of information to acquire meaning from text.
- Learners benefit from opportunities with pictures, symbols, letter/sound correspondence (phonics), and familiar words.

SUMMARY

Reading: Focus of Instruction

Grades K-5

- The learning focus for K-5 students begins with the development of the foundational skills (See PA Core Standards, Foundational Skills K-5):
 - book handling
 - print concepts
 - phonological awareness
 - phonics and word recognition
 - fluency
- At the same time, there must be an emphasis on the development of vocabulary and comprehension so that students see reading as a meaning-making process. “The foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines” (Common Core State Standards (CCSS), 2010, p. 15).
- As beginning readers increase their proficiency in word recognition skills and develop strategies to use language comprehension skills to link prior knowledge to new information in books, leading to the ability to comprehend, evaluate and appreciate text.
- “To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and information texts” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10).



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- Literacy demands change and intensify quickly after third grade. Upper elementary students are expected to learn new words, new facts, and new ideas from reading, as well as to interpret and summarize the texts they read. Combining literacy skills and content knowledge requires a new level of sophistication.
- Learning gradually shifts to deeper comprehension in the intermediate grades supplemented with instruction in word study and fluency as needed.
- Instruction should be differentiated. Struggling readers will need direct, explicit, and systematic instruction with foundational skills. Good readers will need less practice with foundational skills than struggling readers.
- The point is to teach students what they need to learn and not what they already know—to discern when specific children or activities warrant more or less attention.

SUMMARY

Reading: Focus of Instruction

Grades 6-12

- “The skills that students learn through fourth grade are absolutely critical to later success, but they are simply not enough. Adolescent literacy is a shifting landscape where the heights get higher, the inclines steeper, and the terrain rockier...” (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy [CCAAL], 2010, p. 10).
- *Time to Act* (CCAAL, 2010) describes the changes students encounter as they transition to secondary grades:
 - **Texts become longer** – Students need to develop reading stamina.
 - **Word complexity increases** – Students need to develop technical and all-purpose academic vocabularies, with increasing demands on word recognition, pronunciation, fluency, and meaning-making.
 - **Sentence complexity increases** – Students need to understand complex relationships among ideas signaled through connective works set in long and complicated sentences.
 - **Structural complexity increases** – Students need to recognize and use text structure to identify several logical relationships between ideas.
 - **Graphic representations become more important** – Students must synthesize information from graphs, charts, tables, illustrations, and equations, with written text to grasp the full meaning of content-area texts.
 - **Conceptual challenge increases** – Students must synthesize from one task to another and from one set of concepts to another and build logical relationships across multiple aspects of a given conceptual domain with the information they glean from texts.
- The overarching goal is stated clearly in the final Reading Anchor Standard: “Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently” (CCSS, 2010, p. 10).
- Reading at the middle and high school level is characterized by increasing text complexity and focusing on informational text.
- Interacting with text through close reading, analysis, and interpretation is essential.



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- A deep reading of text should engage the reader in interacting with the text to discern not only the craft of the writer, but the connectivity to other texts and the ability to cite evidence to support a conclusion.

Implications for Reading

Reading Instruction

Given the importance of reading instruction in schools, teachers not only need to have an excellent understanding of what has been learned from evidence-based research, they must also be able to apply that knowledge to their teaching. The Report of the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) provided important information about the most effective evidence-based methods for teaching the five essential components of reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (<https://www.nichd.nih.gov>). The panel also indicated that by applying what has been learned from scientific research to the classroom, reading failure can be reduced or avoided. Likewise, the IES Practice Guide Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade (Foorman, et al., 2016) emphasized the continued importance of developing critical skills such as awareness of speech sounds within words, decoding and word analysis, and the use of reading of connected text for accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The Panel and the IES reports provide important information to those responsible for teaching students to read, especially in the early years.

Reading Instruction for Students at Risk

Teachers in schools are often faced with teaching students who have or are at risk for developing reading disabilities. The IES Report (Connor, et al., 2014, p. 59) makes several recommendations that should be helpful in planning and implementing reading instruction for those students, especially those at the elementary level. These include:

- Increase the intensity of the instruction in kindergarten and grade 1;
- Provide fluency interventions that focus on repeated reading of text, opportunities to practice reading in the classroom, and reading a range of text;
- Provide extensive opportunities to hear and use complex oral language;
- Have students participate in peer-assisted or collaborative learning;
- Provide differentiated instruction and interventions that target each individual student's profile (see Essential Element 5); and
- Remember that what is known about how typically developing readers learn to read also holds for students with low incidence disabilities.

Birth to Age 5

The Infant-Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards for Early Childhood provide parents and educators with the guidelines for content that can be taught prior to the kindergarten year.



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Important implications for instruction include:

- Enhance the classroom environment to include environmental print and active learning centers that focus on language and literacy skills. Use this time for explicit and systematic one-on-one or small group instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Encourage a playful environment where language and literacy skill building is incorporated into daily routines, activities and transitions.
- Engage in genuine and meaningful conversations and ask questions to get children to think critically while expressing themselves.
- Provide young children with a great deal of teacher support in the form of modeled instruction. In reading, this includes the Read Aloud, where teachers or parents read a story to the child, thinking aloud to model their thought processes. Characteristics of effective shared reading include interactive reading activities such as discussion of vocabulary.
- Read to young children to expose learners to various skills and strategies that must be developed for successful reading. These include exposure to rich vocabulary, complex syntax and provide opportunity to build knowledge of text structures as well as background knowledge.
- Re-read familiar books and allow young learners to participate in the reading. This can help children to develop a positive disposition toward reading and literacy and provide guided practice as children build a repertoire of literacy skills and strategies.
- Provide access to a variety of books. Independent 'pretend reading' leads to practice with text reading. This can also enhance oral language and vocabulary development.
- Consult the Building Blocks of Literacy Learning Path as it provides teachers with valuable information regarding early literacy.

Grades K-5

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts (Pre K-5) provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students. Excellent literacy instruction in the primary grades is essential for preventing future reading difficulties.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Provide daily opportunities for students to engage in structured language and literacy learning tasks and routines that promote interactive play and inquiry. This includes direct, explicit, and developmentally sound instruction and relies on purposeful classroom arrangement that includes enriched learning centers and ample hands-on, active materials.
- Teach the foundational skills (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency) explicitly, and provide opportunities for students to apply what they are learning. PA Core Appendix A contains supplementary information that provides significant and detailed information to support the teaching of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, the progression of phonological awareness, and orthography.



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- Develop essential word recognition skills and language processes/skills necessary for proficient reading.
- Develop the language skills and processes necessary for comprehension using both direct and indirect instructional approaches.
- Coordinate and integrate the teaching of word recognition skills and comprehension skills and strategies.
- Provide explicit instruction that enables students to apply problem-solving, monitoring, and self-correcting strategies when they are reading. Such strategies may include: re-reading, previewing a text, asking questions, reading aloud, using story structure, using text aids, marking texts, using context, writing in response to reading, and discussing text with others (Dorn & Soffos, 2005, p. 42).
- Provide opportunities for students to read and discuss a variety of interesting and appropriate texts from multiple genres.
- Recognize that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are closely intertwined. Classroom practices should be planned so they emphasize these connections (e.g., writing in response to reading).
- Consult the Building Blocks of Literacy Learning Path as it provides valuable information regarding literacy acquisition.
- There are evidence-based practices that support students in the classroom and enable educators to effectively implement standards-based instruction. See the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS-RtI).
- Refer to the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES) Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade: A Practice Guide (Shanahan et al., 2010). Five specific recommendations include:
 - Teach students how to use reading comprehension strategies.
 - Teach students to identify and use the text's organizational structure.
 - Guide students through a focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text.
 - Select texts purposefully to support comprehension development.
 - Establish an engaging and motivating context in which to teach reading comprehension.
- Refer to the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES) Practice Guide Foundational Skills to support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade (Foorman et al., 2016). Four specific recommendations include:
 - Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge.
 - Develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters.
 - Teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.
 - Ensure that each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Grades 6-12

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, the PA Core Standards for Reading in Science and Technical Subjects and the PA Core Standards for Reading in History and



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Social Studies provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Expose students to a variety of texts for a variety of purposes, providing explicit explanations and guidance as needed so that learners can comprehend texts across the content areas.
- Teach specific strategies for navigating informational text across content areas.
- Increase text complexity to develop strategic readers with strong analytical skills.
- Provide instruction in the analysis and evaluation of a variety of texts to determine theme, style, likenesses, etc.
- Provide opportunities for students to examine text from a literary perspective to understand the craft of the writer.
- Refer to the Institute of Education Science's publication entitled *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices: A Practice Guide* (Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, & Torgeson, 2008). This guide recommends that educators:
 - Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.
 - Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.
 - Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.
 - Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.
 - Make available intensive individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by qualified specialists.
- Refer to the Position Statement on Adolescent Literacy (International Literacy Association (ILA) 2012, p.2). Adolescents deserve:
 - Content area teachers who provide instruction in the multiple literacy strategies needed to meet the demands of the specific discipline.
 - A culture of literacy in their schools with a systematic and comprehensive programmatic approach to increasing literacy achievement for all.
 - Access to and instruction with multimodal, multiple texts.
 - Differentiated literacy instruction specific to their individual needs.
 - Opportunities to participate in oral communication when they engage in literacy activities.
 - Opportunities to use literacy in the pursuit of civic engagement.
 - Assessments that highlight their strengths and challenges.
 - Access to a wide variety of print and non-print materials.
- Refer to the Alliance for Excellent Education publication entitled: *Advancing Adolescent Literacy: Pennsylvania's Keystones to Opportunity Comprehensive Literacy Program* (Mariana Haynes, 2014). This report describes Pennsylvania's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant program. The report focuses on the design of instruction and interventions for students struggling to read and write in middle and high schools, including students with disabilities and English Learners.



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WRITING

SUMMARY

Writing: Focus of Instruction

Birth to Age 5

- Preschool writing development is inextricably linked with the child's fine motor development. (See Guiding Principle 5)
- Beginning writers need encouragement and instruction in composing stories and text using pictures, scribbles, letter-like forms, and letters.
- Emergent writers may also write familiar words and label pictures.
- As children develop understanding of letter-sound correspondence, they may attempt to phonetically spell words.
- Preschoolers need opportunities to develop their ability to communicate in writing (both informational and narrative text).

SUMMARY

Writing: Focus of Instruction

Grades K-5

- Kindergarten students begin with pre-writing, and by the end of fifth grade, students are expected to experience writing narrative, persuasive, and informational text. The Pennsylvania Core standards for English Language Arts (2014) states the following:
- Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content. Informative or Explanatory Opinion or Argumentative Narrative Response to Literature Production and Distribution of Writing Technology and Publication Conducting Research Credibility, Reliability, and Validity of Sources Range of Writing
- Provide students with explicit instruction and opportunities to devote significant time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and extended periods throughout the year.
- The primary goal of instruction is to develop the students' ability to use writing as a way of offering and supporting opinions, demonstrating understanding of the subjects they are studying, and conveying real and imagined experiences and events.
- Students need support in learning to appreciate that a key purpose of writing is to communicate clearly to an external, sometimes unfamiliar, audience, and adapting the form and content of their writing to accomplish a task and purpose.
- Students need support to build knowledge on a subject through research projects and to respond analytically to literary and informational sources.



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SUMMARY

Writing: Focus of Instruction

Grades 6-12

- Good writing skills are essential for effective communication.
- As stated in Graham and Perin (2007), “writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy” (p. 3).
- Students should have opportunities to write in persuasive, informative, and narrative modes, with guidance as needed.
- Students should write routinely over extended periods (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter periods (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- Effective writers employ detail in their writing, sustain a focus, and produce well-organized writing suited to purpose. They are able to gather information, evaluate sources, and cite evidence.
- Writing should be used as a tool for learning, not just showing what was learned, in all disciplines.
- Writers need to be strategic in creating the writing appropriate to task, whether it be on-demand writing, or drafting and redrafting over time.
- Technology is one of the tools to employ to support the writing process.
- Students need opportunities to build knowledge on a subject through research projects, and to respond analytically to literary and informational sources.

Implications for Writing

Birth to Age 5

The Infant-Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards for Early Childhood provide parents and educators with the guidelines for content that can be taught prior to the kindergarten year.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Encourage children to experiment with writing.
- Incorporate writing opportunities across the curriculum and provide functional writing opportunities that are connected to daily classroom routines and activities (e.g., sign-in sheets, lunch counts).
- Model the act of writing for young children to foster an emerging understanding of what writers do. When adults write messages for children, learners begin to see that writing is “talk written down,” — that our messages can be recorded and read back later.
- Oral language is the building block to writing: When children understand they can write what they say, they have endless opportunities for composition. When adults guide students in their writing approximations, children can gain new understandings about composition, concepts about print, and phonics.



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- Spelling approximations provide young learners with essential learning opportunities. When children write letters to represent sounds, they are practicing and building phonics skills. This practice ultimately leads to increased fluency in writing, as it can lead to conventional spelling of high frequency words (Bear, Invernizzi, & Templeton 2007). Young children often develop this ability spontaneously; however, modeled instruction and guided practice enhance this, and all other, learning.
- Provide preschoolers with daily opportunities to explore writing materials and conventions in a purposeful and meaningful manner.

Grades K-5

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Provide opportunities for students to write through a variety of modalities and technologies including manually, graphically, spoken-dictation, artistically, and digitally to ensure all modalities are taken into consideration (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile).
- Support students writing efforts by teaching multiple strategies for developing and organizing a message, strategies for revising and editing, and methods for sharing to a specific audience.
- Provide students with systematic and explicit instruction in basic writing skills including handwriting, spelling, and grammar.
- Provide students with systematic and explicit instruction in quality of writing as appropriate per the individual student's instructional level.
- Allot time daily for students to write with guidance for a variety of purposes (e.g., quick writes, reader response, summarization).
- Model writing of narrative, informational, and opinion writing during course of the school year.
- Model essay writing to support text dependent analysis with both literary and informational texts as appropriate.
- Focus on the writing process as a means of producing and improving writing.
- Provide opportunities for research and the creation of short and long projects, employing technology as appropriate.
- Refer to the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES) Teaching Elementary School Students to be Effective Writers (Graham et al., 2012). Four specific recommendations include: - Provide daily time for students to write. - Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purpose. - Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing. - Create an engaged community of writers.

Grades 6-12

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, the PA Core Standards for Writing in Science and Technical Subjects, and the PA Core Standards for Writing in History and



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Social Studies provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Provide opportunities during literacy instruction as well as in all academic disciplines for students to write daily for a variety of purposes.
- Provide students with systematic and explicit instruction in writing skills, i.e., the conventions of language.
- Develop student writers through modeling and explicit instruction in narrative, informational, and argumentative writing.
- Model essay writing to support text dependent analysis with both literary and informational texts as appropriate.
- Focus on the writing process as a means of producing and improving writing.
- Provide opportunities for research and the creation of short and long projects, employing technology as appropriate.
- Refer to the Institute of Education Sciences' (IES) *Practice Guide Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (Graham et al., 2016). Three specific recommendations include: - Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect-instructional cycle. - Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features. - Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

SUMMARY

Speaking and Listening: Focus of Instruction

Birth to Age 5

- Young children express themselves and their knowledge of the world through spoken language.
- The overarching goal is to ensure that learners can speak and listen, so that they can share ideas and understanding those of others.
- The primary goals for listening and speaking include teaching preschoolers how to converse about a topic, to convey understanding, and to ask questions to clarify meaning.
- Students need many opportunities to talk with others, such as their parents, teachers, other supportive adults, and peers.
- Early learners need support and scaffolding from adults to help them elaborate and expand on what they have said.
- Young children need experiences and guidance in how to listen to others.



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SUMMARY

Speaking and Listening: Focus of Instruction

Grades K-5

- Speaking and listening are important prerequisites for learning to read and write; furthermore, they have intrinsic value as modes of communication.
- Students must have opportunities to take part in a variety of rich structured conversations with small groups, an individual partner, or the whole class.
- Students must be able to “contribute accurate, relevant information, respond to and develop what others have said, make comparisons and contrasts, and analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in various domains” (CCSS, 2010, p. 22).

SUMMARY

Speaking and Listening: Focus of Instruction

Grades 6-12

- Speaking and listening focuses on two areas: (a) comprehension and collaboration and (b) presentation of knowledge and ideas.
- Students need to become effective speakers and listeners whether engaged in one-on-one, small group, or whole class interactions.
- Listening attentively and critically, responding thoughtfully, and building upon the ideas of others creates effective communicators.
- Specific ideas from The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts (2014, pp. 27-30): Students need opportunities to participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Students must have many opportunities to participate in a variety of richly structured conversations as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner.

Implications for Speaking and Listening

Birth to Age 5

Educators and parents of children from birth to age 5 can gather essential information from Pennsylvania’s Infant-Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten learning standards to plan instruction. See the Essential Element of Oral Language in this document for additional information.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Participate in children’s play and use specific comments and/or details to acknowledge their efforts and ideas.
- Create an environment that encourages children to be active conversationalists. Promote active listening and response of appropriate and sincere feedback that encourages greater dialogue. Allow for quality conversation to occur throughout the day in routines, activities, and transitions.



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- Model positive speaking and listening skills. When children participate in oral language activities, they learn to apply the good speaking and listening skills that have been modeled.
- Plan opportunities to model effective conversational conventions, such as turn-taking, asking questions, and providing complete responses.
- Provide authentic oral language activities, such as “Show and Tell” or “Buzz Groups.”
- Provide students with opportunities to share their own experiences.

Grades K-5

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Create an environment in which students have daily opportunities to practice speaking and listening skills during classroom discussions, in small groups, with partners and during child-directed activities. Students must be able to engage in collaborative communication and take part in discussions by adding relevant details, making accurate comparisons, and developing their own points using evidence.
- Instruct students on the importance of collaborating, being a good listener, supporting ideas with facts (depending on grade level), and using media in effective communication.
- Model effective turn-taking, collaboration, and listening skills.
- Provide guided practice in listening and speaking skills as well as feedback to students.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in one-to-one, small group, and whole class conversations. This task can be accomplished through whole class discussion or center time activities.
- Provide students with opportunities to develop and ask their own questions about topics they are studying and texts they are reading.

Grades 6-12

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts (Grades 6-12) provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Provide instruction on the importance of collaborating, being a good listener, supporting ideas with facts, and using media in effective communication.
- Model effective turn-taking, collaboration, and listening skills.
- Provide guided practice in listening and speaking that allows the teacher to provide feedback to students. This exercise ultimately leads to self-regulated learning.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage in one-to-one, small group, and whole class conversations throughout the school day.



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- Provide students with opportunities to assume responsibility for their own small-group discussions; facilitate such discussions by providing guidelines.
- Provide opportunities for students to talk with each other about the texts that they are reading, especially in the academic disciplines. Such talk develops knowledge of academic language and conceptual understanding.
- Provide opportunities for students to discuss and make connections among multiple texts. Such discussions should include questions that are intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual (Hartman & Allison, 1996).

LANGUAGE

SUMMARY

Language: Focus of Instruction

Birth to Age 5

- A primary goal for young learners (birth through age 5) is to expose children to good models of effective language use. This exposure will help children to develop understanding prior to receiving explicit language instruction in kindergarten and beyond.
- Young learners need to understand that language is a tool for communication.
- The development of vocabulary is a key goal for the development of literacy and language in young children.
- Young children need many experiences and opportunities to use spoken language and gestures to convey a message.
- Emergent learners begin to approximate writing as a means of sharing their ideas, and “pretend read” in an effort to gain meaning from written text.

SUMMARY

Language: Focus of Instruction

Grades K-5

- Three focus areas comprise the language strand (CCSS, 2010): Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language; and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use.
- Students must gain control over many conventions of standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics, as well as learn other ways to use language to convey meaning effectively.
- They must also be able to determine or clarify the meaning of grade-appropriate words encountered through listening, reading, and media use; come to appreciate that words have non-literal meanings, shadings of meaning, and relationships to other words; and expand their vocabulary while studying content.
- They must be able to use the structure of words and word parts to determine word meaning.



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SUMMARY

Language: Focus of Instruction

Grades 6-12

- The language strand is comprised of three focus areas: Conventions of Standard English; Knowledge of Language; and Vocabulary Acquisition and Use.
- The conventions of standard English include grammar, usage, and mechanics, as well as the ability to use language to convey meaning effectively.
- Understanding how language functions in different contexts, making effective choices for meaning, and comprehending more completely when reading or listening are all key concepts for the knowledge of language.
- The area of vocabulary acquisition includes determining or clarifying the meaning of words through context clues, understanding word relationships and nuances in meanings, acquiring and using content specific words, and understanding the structure of words and word parts (morphology).

Implications for Language

Language learning is a precursor to literacy learning. As such, it requires that learners have opportunities to listen to and talk with adults and peers. Rich language learning in the home and in the classroom, is essential for developing the students' vocabulary/concepts and for building the necessary foundation for literacy acquisition.

Birth to Age 5

The Infant-Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards for Early Childhood provide the content that needs to be addressed at this age level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Children need many opportunities to play with language as they acquire literacy skills. They should be immersed in oral language opportunities, including authentic conversations, and planned sharing experiences.
- Adults should demonstrate accurate conventions in speaking, acting as a model of standard language use.
- Children should also have opportunities to see their spoken language, and the speech of others, written down. This experience will facilitate the acquisition and development of early reading and writing skills. For example, students, either as individuals or as a group, can dictate messages that teachers can then write for them.
- Students should be immersed in books and other texts (including their own writing) so that they can practice reading the messages written by them and others. Teachers and/or parents should read a variety of books to young children and provide books for independent browsing and exploration.



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Grades K-5

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Focus on the use of language as a tool for communication - as a means for writers to express themselves with style and clarity, as a means for speakers to express ideas clearly, and as a means for readers to understand the author's explicit and implicit message.
- Teach words in clusters as a means of facilitating a deeper understanding of word meaning (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008).
- Introduce new words within a context and provide friendly explanations that make understanding more concrete. Provide for a high frequency of encounters with the words (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008).
- Recognize that reading, writing, speaking, listening and language are closely intertwined. As a result of this relationship, many of the classroom implications are connected. There are research-based, evidence-based practices that support language use in the classroom.
- Support the language development of English Learners (ELs). See Best Practice for ELLS: Vocabulary Instruction and Pennsylvania English Language Proficiency Standards.

Grades 6-12

The PA Core Standards for English Language Arts, the PA Core Standards for Writing in Science and Technical Subjects, and the PA Core Standards for Writing in History and Social Studies provide the content that needs to be addressed at each grade level. These standards are the expectations we should have for all students.

Important implications for instruction include:

- Focus on the use of language as a tool for communication – as a means for writers to express themselves with style and clarity, as a means for speakers to express ideas clearly, and as a means for readers to understand the author's explicit and implicit message.
- Refer to the PA Core Standards for English Language Arts for further information.
- The extensive research base on vocabulary learning and teaching provides important guidelines that inform instruction (Harmon & Wood, 2008). This research summary highlights relevant studies that support several key understandings of vocabulary learning and teaching. Harmon and Wood (2008) described the following six key understandings for all teachers across age levels and content areas:
 - Word knowledge is important for learning;
 - Word knowledge is complex;
 - Metacognition is an important aspect of vocabulary learning;



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- Effective vocabulary instruction moves beyond the definitional level of word meanings; and
- Vocabulary learning occurs implicitly in classrooms across disciplines.
- Vocabulary learning occurs through direct instruction as well as informal encounters with words.

Related Information from Common Core State Standards

In the sections below, we provide selected information from the CCSS (2010), addressing text complexity, foundational skills, and writing. Each of these sections describe relevant information that supports the PA Core Standards for English Language Arts. We conclude with a section that describes the alignment of CCSS Expectations and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Text Complexity

Success in the workforce or in post-secondary education requires being able to independently read a high volume of complex texts. Various indicators show that many high school graduates are not prepared to do this task because they have not had experience with texts of the same complexity as they will encounter in colleges, technical schools, and the workplace. They have also not worked with the same volume of expository texts (as opposed to narrative texts) that they will encounter in post-secondary schools or the workplace. A study of American College Testing (ACT) results showed that student success in college was not more closely linked to student ability to answer higher-order questions such as inferences but was instead linked to the ability to read high complexity text. Note that the PA Core Standards are designed to ensure that students have sufficient exposure to high complexity texts across text genres and content areas.

Three-part model to measure text complexity:

1. *Qualitative evaluation* of text is based on aspects of text best measured by human readers, text purpose, structure, language use, and knowledge demands.
2. *Quantitative evaluation* of text addresses text readability as measured by word length, word frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion. These factors are more effectively measured text formulas run by computer.
3. *Reader and task considerations* refer to variables specific to a reader such as motivation, prior knowledge, and prior experience. These factors are best measured by educators who know both the text and the student (CCSS, 2010).

CCSS Appendix A - Research Supporting Key Elements of the Standards in the CCSS contains samples of annotated texts. These examples include a sample of the text, the assigned grade level, text complexity band, an explanation based on the text's qualitative and quantitative evaluations, and a discussion of reader and task considerations. These examples show how the three-part text complexity model works in application to specific texts.



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CCSS Appendix B – Text Exemplars. One of the most notable features of Appendix B is the provision of exemplar texts. Included are specific examples of texts that students should be able to master in specific grade bands. There is not an expectation that teachers use all or only the exemplar texts, but the exemplar texts provide clear examples of the nature and complexity that is expected of students in the different grade bands. Appendix B contains these exemplar texts, and it also includes sample performance tasks by grade band and genre. Appendix B includes the following types of exemplar texts:

Exemplars by Grade Bands

K-1 and 2-3	4-5	6-8 and 9-10 and 11-CCR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Poetry • Read-Aloud Stories • Read-Aloud Poetry • Informational Texts • Read-Aloud Informational Texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Drama • Poetry • Informational Texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories • Drama • Poetry • Informational: English Language Arts • Informational: History and Social Studies • Informational: Science, Math, and Technical Subjects

Reading Standards: Foundational Skills

Included with the CCSS (2010) Reading Standards for K-5 are foundational skills for K-5 students that focus on key aspects of learning to read. The foundational skills focus on print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency (CCSS, 2010). CCSS Appendix A also contains supplementary information that provides significant and detailed information to support the teaching of phoneme-grapheme correspondences, the progression of phonological awareness, and orthography (CCSS, 2010).

Writing – CCSS

The CCSS (2010) focus on three types of writing: argument, informational or explanatory, and narrative. An argument is a reasoned, logical text designed to demonstrate that a writer’s proposition is valid. Informational or explanatory text is intended to describe or explain a topic. Its purpose is to clarify, while an argument text is intended to persuade. Narrative text conveys experience and uses time as a structure. Narrative texts can address content areas such as biographies in history and social studies, and accounts of experiments in science.

The CCSS (2010) place special emphasis on the writing of arguments based on substantive topics or issues. The ability to do this well is important for both college and career readiness. The CCSS (2010) point out that an argument is a text designed to make its point through logic and reasons as opposed to the emotional approaches that might be found in persuasive writing.



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Several studies highlight that a student’s ability to write a logical, reasoned argument supported by relevant facts is key for academic success. The ability to write an argument is also critical for career success, since the work of many professions is to address issues through research, reflection, and decision-making and then sharing the results of that process with others. Knowing how to write a high-quality argument text will also prepare students to evaluate the argument texts created by others, and this is a skill that is vital in the information age (CCSS, 2010). In the PA Core Standards, there is a similar listing of types of writing: narrative, informative or explanatory, and opinion or argumentative.

CCSS Appendix C - Student Writing Samples. Appendix C contains student writing samples from across the grade levels. These samples are annotated to demonstrate the criteria for quality writing at each grade level, and all samples meet the quality expected for the grade level. They are produced in different settings and include in-class work, on-demand assessments, and research projects. These samples are useful resources for making the CCSS writing standards clear and explicit, and they show what quality writing in the different writing types looks like across the grade levels.

Alignment of CCSS Expectations and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The CCSS’ (2010) increased emphasis on the reading of informational texts and on the writing of informational texts, especially arguments, is aligned to the NAEP’s increased emphasis on informational texts. Note the increasing emphasis on the use of informational texts according to the distribution of literary and informational passages by grade level (Reading Framework NAEP 2017, p. 11).

Grade	Literary	Informational
4	50%	50%
8	45%	55%
12	30%	70%