

Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan

Five Guiding Principles

Literacy as a Critical Foundation for All Learning

Literacy is a critical foundation for all learning. Being fully literate in the 21st 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.

Diversity

Diversity (e.g., linguistic, cultural, race and socioeconomic status) should be acknowledged, valued, and respected in our schools and classrooms. Students should have educational experiences that enable them to learn about their own culture as well as the culture of others, to make connections between what they know and what they are learning. By valuing and acknowledging diversity in our curriculum and instructional practices, student learning, motivation, and access to educational opportunities will be increased.

High Expectations

There must be high expectations for all learners and a belief that all can gain literacy skills that prepare them to be future ready; that is, to be successful in college, career, and as citizens. Instruction must address the full range of learners and be differentiated to meet each child's needs; such instruction requires a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education.

Evidence-Based Decision Making

Decision making about literacy programs, practices, and policies must be evidence-based; that is, it must be grounded in reliable and valid research results and informed by experiential and contextual evidence. Evidence must come from multiple sources and provide information about the many factors that influence student learning.

Professional Learning

Educators must be prepared to teach effectively in the schools of the 21st century. Practicing teachers will benefit from ongoing, job-embedded learning opportunities that promote lifelong learning and reflective teaching.

Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan Six Essential Elements

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).

Oral Language and Academic Discourse

Oral language is the foundation for learning and for literacy development. Speaking and listening are tools of communication that become the basis for the written word.

Assessment

An assessment system that addresses the dual purposes of assessment (i.e., accountability and informing decision-making) is a critical component of a district comprehensive literacy plan. An effective assessment plan requires the inclusion of technically adequate information, multiple measures, and provides opportunities for educators to learn how to administer, analyze, interpret, and apply data results to inform instructional practices and improve student learning.

21st Century Classrooms

Students in 21st century classrooms will need to be equipped with skills that go beyond what classrooms currently offer to meet future demands and address complex problems that can't be anticipated or presently conceived. Classrooms must offer students opportunities to develop real-world problem-solving skills that enable them to think critically and creatively, work collaboratively with others, and analyze, interpret, and synthesize information. Additionally, teachers in 21st century classrooms must have the knowledge and skills that allow them to provide students with opportunities to grapple with new, challenging, and difficult information. Such difficult learning should occur in an environment that is engaging, fosters resiliency, and includes both print and digital resources.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is key to enhancing students' ability to learn. Teachers must have the literacy knowledge and knowledge of students that enable them to plan instruction that accounts for the differences in students' needs, interests, cultures, and experiential backgrounds.

Disciplinary Literacy

Learning information in the academic disciplines is enhanced when teachers provide students with supported experiences and opportunities to read, write, talk, and think deeply in service of content learning. This allows students to experience deep disciplinary literacy as a means of learning content.