

# Academic Standards for Geography

*June 1, 2009 FINAL  
Elementary Standards  
Grades 3-8*



*Pennsylvania Department of Education*

*These standards are offered as a voluntary resource for Pennsylvania's schools and await action by the State Board of Education.*

ELEMENTARY STANDARDS  
GRADES 3-8  
Geography

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ELEMENTARY STANDARDS  
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**XX. INTRODUCTION**

This document includes Academic Standards for Geography that describes what students should know and be able to do in four areas:

- ◇ 7.1. Basic Geographic Literacy
- ◇ 7.2. Physical Characteristics of Places and Regions
- ◇ 7.3. Human Characteristics of Places and Regions
- ◇ 7.4. Interactions Between People and the Environment

The Geography Standards describe what students should know and be able to do from third through twelfth grade. They reflect the increasingly complex and sophisticated understanding of geography that students are expected to achieve as they progress through school. Throughout the standards, all grade levels must address the local-to-global progression. Basic concepts found in lower grade levels must be developed more fully at higher grade levels.

Geography is the science of space and place on Earth's surface. Its subject matter is the physical and human phenomena that make up the world's environments and places. These standards build on using geographic tools as a means for asking and answering geographic questions, setting information into a range of spatial contexts, recognizing places and regions as human concepts, understanding the physical processes that have shaped Earth's surface and the patterns resulting from those processes, identifying the relationships between people and environments, recognizing the characteristics and distribution of people and cultures on Earth's surface, focusing on the spatial patterns of settlements and their resulting political structures, and exploring the networks of economic interdependence and the importance of resources. Teachers should employ the Five Fundamental Themes of Geography while proceeding through the Academic Standards for Geography. The themes provide a clear conceptual basis for teachers and students to use in organizing their knowledge.

<b>Five Fundamental Themes of Geography</b>	
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
Location	The absolute and relative position of a place on Earth's surface
Place	How physical and human characteristics define and distinguish a place
Human-Environment Interactions	How humans modify and adapt to natural settings
Movement	How people, ideas and materials move between and among locations
Regions	How an area displays unity in terms of physical and human characteristics

A glossary is included to assist the reader in clarifying terminology contained in the standards.

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7.1. Basic Geographic Literacy												
7.1.3. GRADE 3		7.1.4. GRADE 4		7.1.5. GRADE 5		7.1.6. GRADE 6		7.1.7. GRADE 7		7.1.8. GRADE 8		
<i>Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:</i>												
Geographic Tools	7.1.3.A. Identify how basic <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> and <b>environment</b> .		7.1.4.A. Describe how common <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> , and <b>environment</b> .		7.1.5.A. Describe how common <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> , and <b>environment</b> .		7.1.6.A. Describe how common <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> , and <b>environment</b> .		7.1.7.A. Explain how common <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> , and <b>environment</b> .		7.1.8.A. Explain and illustrate how <b>geographic tools</b> are used to organize and interpret information about people, <b>places</b> , and <b>environments</b> .	
	Location of Places and Regions	7.1.3.B. Identify and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by physical and <b>human features</b> .		7.1.4.B. Describe and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by physical and <b>human features</b> .		7.1.5.B. Describe and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by physical and <b>human features</b> .		7.1.6.B. Describe and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by physical and <b>human features</b> .		7.1.7.B. Explain and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by physical and <b>human features</b> .		7.1.8.B. Explain and locate <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> as defined by <b>physical</b> and <b>human features</b> .

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<b>7.2. Physical Characteristics of Places and Regions</b>						
<b>7.2.3. GRADE 3</b>		<b>7.2.4. GRADE 4</b>		<b>7.2.5. GRADE 5</b>		<b>7.2.6. GRADE 6</b>
						<b>7.2.7. GRADE 7</b>
						<b>7.2.8. GRADE 8</b>
<i>Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:</i>						
<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	7.2.3.A. Identify the physical characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.4.A. Identify the physical characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.5.A. Describe the characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.6.A. Describe the characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.7.A. Explain the characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.8.A. Explain the characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .
<b>Physical Processes</b>	7.2.3.B. Identify the basic physical processes that affect the physical characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.4.B. Identify the basic physical processes that affect the physical characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.5.B. Identify the basic physical processes that affect the physical characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> .	7.2.6.B. Describe the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface.	7.2.7.B. Describe the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface.	7.2.8.B. Explain the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface.

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<b>7.3. Human Characteristics of Places and Regions</b>						
<b>7.3.3. GRADE 3</b>		<b>7.3.4. GRADE 4</b>		<b>7.3.5. GRADE 5</b>		<b>7.3.6. GRADE 6</b>
						<b>7.3.7. GRADE 7</b>
						<b>7.3.8. GRADE 8</b>
<i>Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:</i>						
<b>Human Characteristics</b>	7.3.3.A. Identify the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>	7.3.4.A. Identify the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>	7.3.5.A. Identify the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>	7.3.6.A. Describe the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>	7.3.7.A. Describe the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>	7.3.8.A. Explain the human characteristics of <b>places</b> and <b>regions</b> using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Settlement</li> <li>• Economic activities</li> <li>• Political activities</li> </ul>

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<b>7.4. Interactions Between People and the Environment</b>						
	<b>7.4.3. GRADE 3</b>	<b>7.4.4. GRADE 4</b>	<b>7.4.5. GRADE 5</b>	<b>7.4.6. GRADE 6</b>	<b>7.4.7. GRADE 7</b>	<b>7.4.8. GRADE 8</b>
<i>Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:</i>						
<b>Impact of Physical Systems on People</b>	7.4.3.A. Identify the effect of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within a community.	7.4.4.A. Identify the effect of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within a community.	7.4.5.A. Describe and explain the effects of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within <b>regions</b> .	7.4.6.A. Describe and explain the effects of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within <b>regions</b> .	7.4.7.A. Describe and explain the effects of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within <b>regions</b> .	7.4.8.A. Illustrate the effects of the <b>physical systems</b> on people within <b>regions</b> .

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<b>7.4. Interactions Between People and the Environment</b>						
	<b>7.4.3. GRADE 3</b>	<b>7.4.4. GRADE 4</b>	<b>7.4.5. GRADE 5</b>	<b>7.4.6. GRADE 6</b>	<b>7.4.7. GRADE 7</b>	<b>7.4.8. GRADE 8</b>
<i>Pennsylvania's public schools shall teach, challenge and support every student to realize his or her maximum potential and to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to:</i>						
<b>Impact of People on Physical Systems</b>	7.4.3.B. Identify the effect of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within a community.	7.4.4.B. Identify the effect of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within a community.	7.4.5.B. Identify the effect of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within a community.	7.4.6.B. Describe and explain the effects of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within <b>regions</b> .	7.4.7.B. Describe and explain the effects of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within <b>regions</b> .	7.4.8.B. Interpret the effects of people on the <b>physical systems</b> within <b>regions</b> .



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**XXI. GLOSSARY**

<b>Climate:</b>	Long-term patterns and trends in weather elements and atmospheric conditions.
<b>Environment:</b>	Everything in and on Earth's surface and its atmosphere within which organisms, communities, or objects exist.
<b>Geographic Tools:</b>	Tools used by geographers to organize and interpret information. Tools range from the very simple (maps and globes) to the complex (Geographic Information Systems, population pyramids, satellite images, and climate graphs).
<b>Human Features:</b>	Tangible and intangible ideas associated with the culture, society, and economy of places or areas. These include the spatial arrangement of land uses including countries, states, cities, neighborhoods, latitude and longitude, time zones, transportation and trade, cultural ties, and population patterns including population density and mobility.
<b>Place:</b>	An area with distinctive human and physical characteristics; these characteristics give it meaning and character and distinguish it from other areas.
<b>Physical Systems:</b>	Systems that have an impact on the geographical formations of an area, such as weather systems, erosions, and hydrology.
<b>Region:</b>	An area with one or more common characteristics or features that gives it a measure of consistency and makes it different from surrounding areas.
<b>Resource:</b>	An aspect of the physical environment that people value and use to meet a need for fuel, food, industrial product, or something else of value.
<b>Spatial:</b>	Pertains to space on Earth's surface.