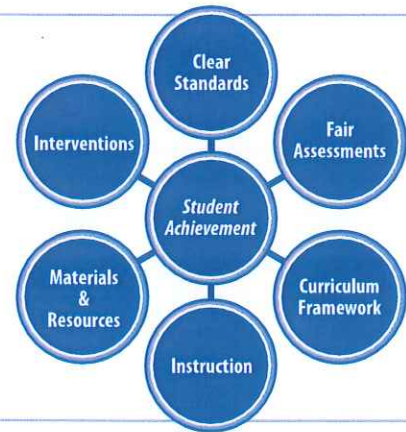


STANDARDS ALIGNED SYSTEM (SAS) IN PENNSYLVANIA

www.pdesas.org

Definition:

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: Clear Standards, Fair Assessments, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, Materials & Resources, and Interventions.



Clear Standards

Pennsylvania Standards describe what students should know and be able to do; they increase in complexity and sophistication as students progress through school. Assessment Anchors clarify the Standards assessed on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and the Keystone Exams, and they can be used by educators to help prepare students for the state assessments. The metaphor of an anchor signals that the Assessment Anchors

clarify the relationship between state Standards and our assessment system. Assessment Anchors are further elaborated with Eligible Content. Eligible Content identifies how deeply an Anchor should be covered and specifies the range of the content to best prepare students for the state assessments. Not all of the Eligible Content is assessed; however, it shows the range of knowledge from which we design the tests.

Fair Assessments

Fair Assessment is a process used by teachers and students before, during, and after instruction to provide feedback and adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve student achievement and to provide appropriate challenges for all students at their instructional levels. In Pennsylvania the four types of assessment are summative, formative, benchmark, and diagnostic.

Summative Assessment: Seeks to make an overall judgment of progress made at the end of a defined period of instruction. They may occur at the end of a school level, grade, or course, or are administered at certain grades for purposes of state or local accountability. These are considered high-stakes assessments and the results are often used in conjunction with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). They are designed to produce clear data on the student's accomplishments at key points in his or her academic career.

Formative Assessment: Used by teachers and students during instruction to provide feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. In Pennsylvania, formative assessment is defined as classroom-based assessment strategies 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. Establishing these permits the instructor to remediate students and adjust the curriculum to meet their unique needs.

Benchmark Assessment: Measures achievement of important grade level content periodically during the year in order to provide feedback about how students are progressing toward demonstrating proficiency.

Curriculum Framework

The Curriculum Framework specifies what is to be taught for each subject in the curriculum. In Pennsylvania, Curriculum Frameworks include Big Ideas, Concepts, Competencies,

Essential Questions, Vocabulary, and Exemplars aligned to Standards and, where appropriate, Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content.

Curriculum Framework Components:

- **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:** Exemplars of student work, (e.g. performance tasks) are designed to show students understanding, use, and/or application of higher-level cognitive knowledge and skills. Typically the tasks are designed in a “real world” or authentic context. Performance assessments permit educators to observe students while they are performing or to evaluate products created or produced. Typically these evaluations are based on pre-specified criteria (rubrics).

Instruction

Aligned instruction provides purposeful direction of the learning process to include the following activities:

- Teaching topics that incorporate the content standards.
- Ensuring a challenging instructional program that includes monitoring mechanisms to assess individual student progress and readiness to master subsequent learning tasks.
- Differentiating instruction that provides varying levels of difficulty, taking into account the learning needs of each student as measured by formative and summative, standards-based assessments.
- Implementing meaningful learning tasks that give students a clear sense of purpose in working to achieve the content standards.

Materials and Resources

- 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.

Interventions

An intervention is a systematic attempt by educators to provide students with research-based supports that ensure meaningful access to the general education curriculum. These data-based interventions ensure students are provided with supports they need to meet and exceed grade-level standards. Interventions should be conducted in addition to grade level standards based core instruction.

A comprehensive system of research-validated interventions includes a graduated set of safety nets aligned to specific student needs as evidenced by assessment data that is directly linked to student performance. Research-validated interventions are implemented based on the type, level, and intensity of student need. Often these interventions are tiered and are based upon student assessment data (See Pennsylvania’s Response to Instruction and Intervention Model).

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More information on the Standards Aligned System can be accessed at www.pdesas.org.