

Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan

Language: Focus of Instruction

Summary

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.

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.

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).