

What's New in the Revised Learning Standards for Early Childhood? **Frequently Asked Questions**

A. Revision Process

1. *Why were the Standards revised?*

The Learning Standards for Early Childhood were revised for two reasons:

- To meet the recommendations of an Alignment Study that was commissioned by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. This study reviewed how well our standards were aligned across the early childhood age groups of infant-toddler, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, and how well they were aligned with identified assessment instruments and the third grade standards. While the Study was positive overall, recommendations suggested that we remove any unmatched or unsequenced standards across infancy through kindergarten, increase the play and active learning processes that are appropriate strategies for learning and stress higher level thinking and the process of learning.

- The Department of Education has adopted the use of the Standards Aligned System (SAS) that describes six essential elements of instruction that support student learning and achievement. The revised Learning Standards for Early Childhood now reflect these six elements and are more closely aligned with SAS and the Academic Standards for grades 3 through 12

2. *How long was the revision process and who participated?*

The revision process began in late January 2009, shortly after the results of the Alignment Study became available. A committee composed of representatives and readers from various entities across the Commonwealth participated in the revision decision-making.

3. *When did the Revised Standards become available for distribution?*

The revised Standards became available in October 2009.

B. Revision Outcomes

4. *What are the overall changes?*

The Revised Standards demonstrate a stronger set of documents that are more consistent, better aligned across ages, more connected to the 3rd-12th grade Academic Standards and reflect the Department of Education's Standards Aligned System. You will notice:

- Greater consistency across the documents. Information within the standards is more similar regardless of age. For instance, the Guiding Principles, Introduction and Program Partnerships are the same for infant-toddler, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten.
- Stronger alignment of the standards themselves. There are more clearly sequenced skills from infancy through kindergarten. Practitioners will be able to identify the sequence of each skill from infancy through kindergarten.
- Greater emphasis on the *process* of learning with more emphasis on higher level thinking and reasoning skills

- Greater infusion of play and active learning strategies
- Stronger articulation of the impact of culture and diversity on children’s learning

C. Similarities and Differences

5. *What looks the same?*

- Same holistic view of children’s development that includes approaches to learning, social-emotional development, motor, language and cognitive development, as well as the focus on parent and family.
- Same Key Areas of Learning, (although worded a little differently), with the same colors that identify the Learning Area
- Same format of standard statements, examples and supportive practices
- Same Guiding Principles
- Content, while wording has changed, is largely the same
- Same logos that denote each of the Learning Areas

6. *What looks different in all of the infant-toddler, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten documents?*

- Big Ideas and Essential Questions that align with the Department of Education’s Standards Aligned System
- Strands provide greater sub categorization of content and align with 3-12th grade
- Numbering system aligns with 3 – 12th grade standards
- Glossary - and resource pages
- The key learning area title pages have descriptive paragraphs of relevant early childhood topics
- Additional descriptive phrases for each of the Key Learning Areas that emphasizes higher level thinking

7. *What looks different in **just** the infant-toddler standards?*

The Infant-Toddler Standards’ structure is more aligned with the age breakouts for child care. They are now broken out by:

Infant: birth through 12 months

Young Toddler: 9 months through 27 months (this acknowledges the uneven development of most young children’s learning)

Older Toddler: 25 through 36 months

Additionally, the standards for each age group appear on the same page to demonstrate the sequence of skills across infant-toddler development, allowing for practitioners to move back and forth through the ages to best match each child’s development with examples and supportive practices to help a child’s emerging skills progress.

“Emerging” appears within the Standards to act as a place holder for a skill that is still being developed without adult expectations of mastery at that particular age

8. *What is the **new** Continuum document that accompanied the Standards?*

This new document defines the sequence of skill development that occurs across ages. The Standards Statements that appear in this document directly reflect the Standards Statements within each of the Learning Standards and provide a glance across the ages to better understand how children’s learning may occur within each area.

9. How do I read the new Standards?

The same format of Standard Statements, Examples and Supportive Practices will be familiar and easy to follow. The additional black column on the left (the Strands) sub-categorize the Standards. A page that describes each of the parts of the Learning Standards is included as part of the Introduction.

10. What is the Standards Aligned System or SAS?

Standards Aligned System has been developed by the Department of Education to describe the key elements that are needed to assure student achievement. The elements are used throughout teaching, regardless of age, to offer guidance and support children need to develop and master the important skills they need for school success. A description of SAS is included within the Learning Standards for Early Childhood’s introduction. Additional information can be found on the Department of Education website.

11. Why is the SAS important for early childhood?

The elements of SAS are used in early childhood education teaching practices. Their articulation through the Department’s mental model (see Standards’ introduction) and, now in early childhood standards, provides the early childhood practitioners additional support for their use of intentional instruction. Furthermore, they enhance the aligned teaching practices for Pennsylvania that span birth through grade 12.

D. Requirements for Use of the Revised Learning Standards for Early Childhood

12. Do I need to begin using the Revised Standards immediately?

The Revised Standards will be *phased in* for use throughout the 2009-10 year. Programs that are currently using the older documents may continue to do so while they become familiar with the newer versions. The older Standards’ content and format continue to represent Pennsylvania’s expectations for children’s development and may be used for lesson planning, instruction, and curriculum development.

The Continuum will provide an excellent resource for practitioners and it is recommended that all programs become familiar with this document and begin using it immediately. The Continuum can be downloaded at:

http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Career_Standards

13. What do I do with the copies of my older standards?

You may continue to use them for instruction and lesson planning as you become familiar with the revised documents. As you transition to the newer Standards, the older versions will be helpful in understanding the changes and the way in which the revised documents enhance the visibility of sequential skill development and align with the older grades’ content and

expectations. Providers may find creative ways to use the older versions, and as a last resort, they should be thrown out when you have begun to fully use the Revised Standards.

E. Obtaining Copies

14. How are the Learning Standards being disseminated?

Programs are being sent a sample packet of the Learning Standards for Early Childhood. This packet includes each of the three Standards documents, Infant-Toddler, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten, along with posters for each and the Continuum. They are being shipped throughout the months of November and December to certified child care facilities, Head Start grantees, elementary schools, higher education, early intervention providers, libraries, PA Pre-K Counts providers, Private Nursery Schools, Family Literacy programs, Parent Child Home grantees and certified Learning Standards instructors.

15. How can I get additional copies of the Learning Standards?

The Standards can be accessed in three ways:

- Purchase them through Waveline Direct at fulfill@wavelinedirect.com. They are \$7.50 each and include the posters, standards and continuum. A complete set of infant-toddler, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and the continuum can be purchased for \$20.00.
- Download them from the PA Keys website. You will find them housed in the Career Preparation section of the Keys' site at http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Career_Standards.
- Use your sample copy to make additional copies.

16. Why do I need to pay for copies of the standards?

The Standards are an instructional tool. Just as curriculum and assessment resources are purchased, the Standards provide an important resource that shapes teachers' lesson planning and understanding of age appropriate curriculum for young children. The Standards' very low price primarily covers the cost of shipping and handling.

17. What is included in the price?

The Standards' purchase includes the Standards document, the Posters, the Continuum and the mailing to your facility.

18. Can I use STARS awards to purchase the Standards?

Yes, purchasing these documents through your STARS funds is an excellent use of your STARS resources.

F. Professional Development

19. How can I learn more about the revisions?

Webinars are being offered that explain the revisions. The dates for these webinars are posted on the Standards section of PA Keys website and will be ongoing throughout the

year. The webinar is approximately 1.5 hours in length and offers PQAS and Act 48 hours.

The recorded webinar and the power point presentation that is used during the Webinar will be posted on the Standards site by mid-December.

20. Do I need to attend a new Standards event if I already attended one previously?

Practitioners are always invited to attend additional sessions on the learning standards to learn more about their uses. The revised standards do not require attendance at a new session. However, it is advisable to attend a webinar so you understand the changes in the new documents.

21. What about the DVD series that uses the older versions of the Standards?

The module handouts will be revised to reflect the Revised Standards but the videos will remain the same. Additional guidance will be published over the next year to help directors and instructors integrate the Revised Standards into their DVD sessions.

These modules continue to be an excellent resource for programs to support staff's use of the standards in their instructional practices. Regardless of the Standards citations, we encourage their use.

G. Additional Information for Instructors

22. If I'm an instructor and I've already been trained with the older versions, do I need to attend a new training event to learn about the revisions?

All instructors should attend the webinar prior to using the revised Standards. If additional professional development is needed, please work with your Regional Key to identify what information is necessary and how it will be delivered to you.

23. Will the Core Series session on Standards be revised?

Yes, the Core Series will be revised to include the Revised Standards. Please expect the revisions to be produced by July 2010.

24. What should I do until the revisions become available?

- Continue to use the current module and remind attendees that the content within the older standards is still relevant.
- Demonstrate the changes within the newer versions by copying a few pages that illustrate the additions.
- Use the Continuum within your presentation.
- Explain how to access the Revised Standards and encourage participants to become familiar with the new documents.

25. Where should I go if I have additional questions?

Your Regional Key is a great place to seek help. Please contact them to learn more about the Revised Learning Standards for Early Childhood. For additional information, you may

contact the Carolyn Gallo at the Bureau of Early Learning Services at the Office of Child Development and Early Learning: cgallo@state.pa.us. 717-214-5704.