

# Understanding Standards Aligned Instruction for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



### **What are Pennsylvania content standards and where are they located?**

Content standards describe what all students should know and be able to do. They are targets for instruction and student learning essential for success in all academic areas. Standards are not a curriculum. Standards are available on the [Pennsylvania Standards Aligned System](#) website.

### **What is PASA Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) and where can I find more information?**

*PASA DLM* is the alternate system of assessment used in Pennsylvania. *PASA DLM* provides a universally designed, computer-based, adaptive assessment with many accessibility considerations and a robust and comprehensive system of professional development and instructional resources. This system of content, instructional resources, and professional development provides significant support to teachers of complex learners. *PASA DLM* is not a curriculum but can be used by educators to meet the instructional needs of students with complex learning needs. More information about the comprehensive system of instruction and assessment can be found at [Dynamic Learning Maps](#).

### **With the implementation of PASA DLM, should the Essential Elements (EEs) be used for instruction and assessment?**

Given *PASA DLM*'s comprehensive system of content, instructional resources, and professional development, teachers should use the EEs for providing standards aligned instruction.

### **What are Essential Elements (EEs)?**

The EEs are the bridge between grade level content standards to academic expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. EEs are available in Kindergarten through Grade 12 and represent both tested content and content relevant for instruction. EEs are reduced in depth, breadth and complexity and include linkage levels in assessed grades. EEs are not new to Pennsylvania and were introduced as a resource through *PASA DLM* in the 2020-2021 school year.

### **Are the EEs aligned to the PA Core?**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has determined the EEs align to PA Core Standards in English Language Arts and mathematics. During the 2023-2024 school year, the PDE will complete a review of science essential elements and PA STEELS standards to confirm alignment.

**What is alternate eligible content (AEC)?**

The AEC was developed in 2015 to reflect modified targets for PA Core Standards in ELA and Math and the PA Academic Standards in Science. AEC was only available in tested grades and reflects tested content exclusively. The AEC was utilized in instruction as written or could be further reduced in complexity using a process called 'essentialization'. With PASA DLM essential elements, linkage levels in grades 3 through high school provide reduced depth, breadth and complexity of content. No 'essentialization' is required in these grades. Given *PASA DLM's* comprehensive system of content, instructional resources, and professional development, teachers should use the EEs for providing standards aligned instruction.

**Where can I go to learn more or ask questions about PASA DLM?**

To learn more about DLM, visit the [DLM website](#) and [Pennsylvania's DLM website](#). Questions regarding instruction or assessment may be emailed to [alternateassessment@pattankop.net](mailto:alternateassessment@pattankop.net).