BELLEFONTE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Questions and Answers about Core Teaching Competencies

The 2007 – 2013 Strategic Plan of the Bellefonte Area School District calls for the establishment of core teaching competencies that identify the knowledge and skills expected of all staff. The goal of the Core Teaching Competencies is to ensure that all educators provide standards-aligned, effective and engaging instruction utilizing research-based “best practices”, including the integration of instructional technology.

Teaching as a profession consists of a set of highly complex practices, which benefit from ongoing reflection and continuous refinement. Current research provides educators with a clear picture of effective teaching practices that will maximize student learning and promote student engagement. The Core Teaching Competencies developed by the Bellefonte Area School District provide a clear description of the essential elements of effective instructional practices that should be found in the classrooms across the district. The following publications were used in the development of the Core Teaching Competencies: Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching (2nd Edition) by Charlotte Danielson, Qualities of Effective Teachers by James H. Stronge, Classroom Instruction that Works by Robert Marzano, Debra Pickering, & Jane Pollack, the National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers developed by the International Society for Technology in Education, Principles of Learning, Teaching and Curriculum developed by the National Institute for School Leadership, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s work on Standards-Aligned Systems.

Each of the four categories refers to a distinct aspect of teaching and aligns with those found on PDE evaluation forms 426, 427 and 428. The four categories of the Core Teaching Competencies include:

Category I: Planning and Preparation for Standards-Aligned Instruction
Category II: Classroom Environment/Classroom Management
Category III: Instructional Delivery/Implementing Standards-Aligned Instruction
Category IV: Professionalism

1. What are the Core Teaching Competencies?
The Core Teaching Competencies identify the evidence-based teaching practices necessary in a Standards-Aligned System and are an updated version of the district’s Components of Professional Practice that were adopted in 2002.

The Core Teaching Competencies have been organized into four categories:

Category 1 – Planning and Preparation for Standards-Aligned Instruction
Category 2 – Classroom Environment/Classroom Management
Category 3 – Instructional Delivery/Implementing Standards-Aligned Instruction
Category 4 – Professionalism

Each category includes between 5 and 8 core competencies that describe an important facet of teaching. Under each core competency there is a listing of essential elements that describe the important features of that specific core competency. The essential element statements provide an idea of the knowledge and skills a teacher might demonstrate in that area.

2. Why has BASD developed the Core Teaching Competencies?
In September, 2007, the Bellefonte Area Board of School Directors approved a new six-year Strategic Plan. In this plan the district is charged with the development of professional staff core teaching competencies as one of many strategies for realizing the district’s new mission, Inspiring Today’s Learners for Tomorrow’s Challenges, and for achieving the plan’s new vision for the future, Working collaboratively, we inspire a passion for learning, a commitment to excellence, and a respect for individuals and diversity as we prepare our students to face ever-changing global demands. In addition, the development and implementation of core teaching competencies will help us to become the district described in the Strategic Plan’s vision statements:
• Our schools have safe, healthy, respectful, and intellectually stimulating environments where students feel motivated to participate.
• Our schools are student-centered, research and data driven, and future focused.
• Our successes and challenges are used as a catalyst for future growth, change, and improvement.
• Our curriculum, instruction, and assessment are continually evolving to ensure alignment with academic standards and use of best instructional and assessment practices.
• Our district utilizes state-of-the-art technology in order to make learning opportunities available and accessible to all members of the learning community.
• Our personnel demonstrate a passion for teaching and learning, a commitment to personal growth and a respect for individuals.
• Our district advocates and nurtures a climate conducive to student learning and staff professional growth by building leadership capacity throughout the system.
• Our district provides facilities and resources that support educational programming, Pre-K through Adult.
• Our parents, schools, and community work together to provide well-rounded educational opportunities.

The Strategic Plan’s Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Goal states, “By 2013 at least 90% of all students will achieve proficiency in all curricular areas, as measured by District assessments aligned with state or national standards in all curricular areas.” The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Action Planning Team developed a strategy to help the district achieve the above goal. This strategy, “To provide effective and engaging instruction utilizing research-based ‘best practices’ and the integration of instructional technology”, includes several activities:

1. Identify core competencies expected of all staff to insure alignment with a standards-aligned system (including instructional technology competencies).
2. Provide professional development and instructional coaching to facilitate implementation of core instructional competencies and "best practices" across the district.
3. Strengthen the degree to which instructional competencies and best practices are practiced and standards drive instruction by implementing administrative walk-throughs and requiring weekly submission of lesson plans by all instructional staff.

3. What do the Core Teaching Competencies do?
   • The Core Teaching Competencies create a clear picture of what teaching looks like in a Standards-Aligned System.
   • The Core Teaching Competencies identify research-based, best practices for all teachers that have been documented to promote improved student learning.
   • They define what the Bellefonte Area School District believes all teachers should know and be able to do in the exercise of their professional responsibilities.

4. How will the Core Teaching Competencies benefit all students?
   The Core Teaching Competencies are grounded in a body of research that has identified principles of effective practice and classroom organization. The implementation of such principles will maximize student learning and promote student engagement, resulting in increased levels of student achievement.

5. How will administrators use the Core Teaching Competencies?
   Administrators will use the Core Teaching Competencies in several ways.
   1. To initiate discussions focused on “best practices” with individual teachers, grade level teams, departmental teams, and/or at faculty meetings.
   2. To provide tenured teachers with a clear focus for professional growth goal setting.
   3. To provide non-tenured teachers with a clear guide for proficiency attainment goal setting.
   4. To help guide decisions about professional development activities.
6. Will the implementation of the Core Teaching Competencies change classroom observations by administrators?
The Core Teaching Competencies represent an agreed upon definition for quality teaching and will serve as the framework that administrators will use to focus classroom observations and teacher supervision.

7. How will I use/What is my role with regards to the Core Teaching Competencies?
Teachers should use the Core Teaching Competencies as a self-assessment for determining their professional growth goals. Through data analysis and personal reflection a teacher can identify specific Core Teaching Competencies upon which to concentrate improvement efforts.

8. How will the Core Teaching Competencies be used for Professional Development?
The Core Teaching Competencies identify the vision that the district has for the professional practice of all teachers. Data will be used to identify the areas on which to focus professional development in order for the district to realize this vision.

9. When will we begin using the Core Teaching Competencies?
Building administrators will begin using the competencies immediately to help guide conversations on effective teaching practices with their teachers. The Core Teaching Competencies are an essential component of the Bellefonte Area School District’s Professional Employee Supervision & Evaluation Plan.

10. Will the Core Teaching Competencies be used for teacher evaluation?
The Core Teaching Competencies align with PDE evaluation forms: 426, 427, and 428 and will be a component of the evaluation process.

11. What is the ultimate goal of the Core Teaching Competencies?
The ultimate goal of the Core Teaching Competencies is to provide a framework for implementing a standards-aligned system that focuses on high levels of achievement and success for all students. High-level learning by all students requires high-level instruction by their teachers.

12. How will the Core Teaching Competencies affect the non-instructional professional staff and other specialists, like the nurses, guidance counselors, speech/language therapists, school psychologists, and librarians?
The Core Teaching Competencies provide a framework for teaching; it is not for the work done by school nurses, guidance counselors, school psychologists, speech therapists, or librarians. Frameworks for these specialists will be re-evaluated and updated to bring them into alignment with standards-aligned systems thinking.