

In January 2007, the State Board adopted essential skills as a requirement for graduation. Beginning in 2012, **students must demonstrate proficiency** in identified essential skills to receive a high school diploma.

The essential skills are process skills that cross academic disciplines and are embedded in the content standards. The skills are not content specific and can be applied in a variety of courses, subjects, and settings.

The Essential Skills Task Force, comprised of educators from K-12, community college, higher education, students, and business/community representatives, worked together to define the essential skills in 2007. After public review and input, the Essential Skill definitions presented in this document were adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2008.

Specific Essential Skills graduation requirements are based on the year the student first enrolled in Grade 9, as shown below:

- **Enrolled in Grade 9 in 2008-09:** Read and comprehend a variety of text
- **Enrolled in Grade 9 in 2009-10:** Read and comprehend a variety of text and Write clearly and accurately
- **Enrolled in Grade 9 in 2010-11 and beyond:** Read and comprehend a variety of text; Write clearly and accurately; and Apply mathematics in a variety of settings

The remaining Essential Skills will be phased-in over subsequent years, timeline to be determined.

1. Read and comprehend a variety of text*

This skill includes all of the following:

- Demonstrate the ability to read and understand text.
- Summarize and critically analyze key points of text, events, issues, phenomena or problems, distinguishing factual from non-factual and literal from inferential elements.
- Interpret significant ideas and themes, including those conveyed through figurative language and use of symbols.
- Follow instructions from informational or technical text to perform a task, answer questions, and solve problems.

**text includes but is not limited to all forms of written material, communications, media, and other representations in words, numbers, and graphics and visual displays using traditional and technological formats*

2. Write clearly and accurately

This skill includes all of the following:

- Adapt writing to different audiences, purposes, and contexts in a variety of formats and media, using appropriate technology.
- Develop organized, well-reasoned, supported, and focused communications.
- Write to explain, summarize, inform, and persuade, including business, professional, technical, and personal communications.
- Use appropriate conventions to write clearly and coherently, including correct use of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, sentence construction, and formatting.

3. Apply mathematics in a variety of settings

This skill includes all of the following:

- Interpret a situation and apply workable mathematical concepts and strategies, using appropriate technologies where applicable.
- Produce evidence, such as graphs, data, or mathematical models, to obtain and verify a solution.
- Communicate and defend the verified process and solution, using pictures, symbols, models, narrative or other methods.

The following Essential Skills will be phased-in after 2014, timeline to be determined.

4. Listen actively and speak clearly and coherently

This skill includes all of the following:

- Listen actively to understand verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Give and follow spoken instructions to perform a task, ask and answer questions, and solve problems.
- Present or discuss ideas clearly, effectively, and coherently, using both verbal and nonverbal techniques.
- Use language appropriate to particular audiences and contexts.

5. Think critically and analytically

This skill includes all of the following:

- Identify and explain the key elements of a complex event, text*, issue, problem or phenomenon.
- Develop a method to explore the relationships between the key elements of a complex event, text*, issue, problem or phenomenon.
- Gather, question and evaluate the quality of information from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- Propose defensible conclusions that address multiple and diverse perspectives.
- Evaluate the strength of conclusions, differentiating reasoning based on facts from reasoning based on opinions.

**text includes but is not limited to all forms of written material, communications, media, and other representations in words, numbers, and graphics and visual displays using traditional and technological formats*

6. Use technology to learn, live, and work

This skill includes all of the following:

- Use creativity and innovation to generate ideas, products, or processes using current technology.
- Use technology to participate in a broader community through networking, collaboration and learning.
- Recognize and practice legal and responsible behavior in the use and access of information and technology.
- Use technology as a tool to access, research, manage, integrate, and communicate ideas and information.

7. Demonstrate civic and community engagement

This skill includes all of the following:

- Apply knowledge of local, state, and U.S. history and government to explain current social and political issues.
- Perform the civic and community responsibilities essential to living in a representative democracy.

8. Demonstrate global literacy

This skill includes all of the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultural, linguistic, and artistic expressions.
- Apply a global perspective to analyze contemporary and historical issues.

9. Demonstrate personal management and teamwork skills

This skill includes all of the following:

- Participate cooperatively and productively in work teams to identify and solve problems.
- Display initiative and demonstrate respect for other team members to complete tasks.
- Plan, organize, and complete assigned tasks accurately and on time.
- Exhibit work ethic and performance, including the ability to be responsible and dependable.