

# Priority Standards

Priority standards, also commonly referred to as power standards, represent the essential learnings a student must master to advance to the next grade level. Identifying priority standards within a curriculum supports learner and educator success in several ways.

- Most state and national standards encompass more grade level material than can reasonably be addressed in the available instructional time of a single school year. Priority standards create a focused set of learning expectations for students.
- Identifying priority standards creates a defined set of concepts and skills around which educators can focus remediation and extension efforts.
- A spotlight on priority standards helps “level the playing field” of learner experiences by ensuring that all students encounter, at a deep level, those concepts and skills that will bolster readiness for future learning.

A focus on priority standards means that while every standard in a grade level is addressed, more time and emphasis can be placed on those standards that fit the criteria of priority standards, and learners experience more instruction and practice on those concepts and skills.

## Background Information

Objective criteria for selecting priority standards ensures selections are well-reasoned and are free from the influence of anecdotal experience or personal bias. Edmentum’s priority standards at each grade level are informed by the work of Ainsworth’s Priority Standards and Marzano’s Critical Concepts.

### Ainsworth’s Guiding Principles in Determining Priority Standards

- **Endurance.** Concepts or skills that last beyond one grade or course.
- **Leverage.** Material that has crossover applications within and across content areas.
- **Readiness for the next level of learning.** Prerequisite concepts and skills that learners need to enter a new grade level or course of study.
- **External exam requirements.** Material that is assessed on year-end summative assessments.

### Marzano’s Criteria for Determining Critical Concepts

- **Range of standards.** A wide range of sources and standards documents are cross-referenced to uncover commonalities in learning expectations.
- **Assessment blueprint data.** Information about the material that summative standardized tests cover is considered to help ensure student success on these measurements.
- **Repetition within standard sets.** Identifying overlap within and across subjects, domains, and strands reveals patterns of expectations that are common across grade levels.

## In Our Product

**Where.** Instruction and assessment in Study Island, Exact Path, and Courseware courses is designed to emphasize priority standards at all grade levels without sacrificing comprehensive standards coverage.

**How.** With a focus on mastery learning, priority standards are


- identified through selection criteria
- mapped to specific learning objectives and outcomes
- instructed and assessed in alignment across a lesson or course

**What.** Priority standards allow educators and learners to focus on the most critical skills and concepts for academic success, enabling

- a clear instructional focus that anchors students' learning experiences.
- actionable data for educators to inform instruction.
- the opportunity to weave in supporting concepts as they apply to the most critical skills.

### Example.

In Courseware, a lesson from English 10 highlights learning objectives derived from priority standards.



### Objective

In this lesson, you will:

- determine themes and analyze how authors develop them
- compare how themes are developed in different texts
- write a comparative analysis on theme development across genres

**Learning Path Resource - Addition and Subtraction Within 1,000**  
K-5th Grade Content Style Assign

Medieval Math			Bunches of Butterflies		
Lesson	Practice	Mastery Quiz	Lesson	Practice	Mastery Quiz
Preview	Preview	Preview	Preview	Preview	Preview

**Alternate Learning Path Resource - Addition and Subtraction Within 1,000**  
K-5th Grade Content Style

On the Cards		Bounty of Butterflies	
Practice	Lesson	Practice	Mastery Quiz
Preview	Preview	Preview	Preview

This grade 2 Exact Path Skill contains multiple modules to provide increased learning opportunities around a power standard in math.

## References

Ainsworth, L. (2003). *Power Standards: Identifying the Standards that Matter the Most*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Ainsworth, L. (2013). *Prioritizing the Common Core: Identifying Specific Standards to Emphasize the Most*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

DuFour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. & Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Development Communities at Work*. Solution Tree.

Sims, J.A. (2016). *The Critical Concepts (final version: English language arts, mathematics, and science)*. Marzano Resources