



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

Colorado Academic Standards

Standards for student learning are not new in Colorado. Passed in 1993, House Bill 93-1313 initiated standards-based education in Colorado. That law required the state to create standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, civics, geography, economics, art, music and physical education. The law also led to the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) in 1996.

State standards for student learning define what students should know and be able to do at the end of a grade level. Standards advance equity of outcomes for students by setting a bar for student performance, defining the floor but not the ceiling of student learning.

Colorado Academic Standards are informed by standards in top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in a global economy and society. Presently, too many students graduate from high school without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and career.

Passage of CAP4K

In 2008, the Colorado legislature passed Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), calling for the development of postsecondary and workforce ready standards for students, also known as college and career ready standards.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) engaged in a year-long process to update its existing academic standards in 10 content areas (dance, drama and theater arts; mathematics; music; reading, writing and communicating; science; social studies; visual arts; and world languages) as well as English language proficiency standards for students whose primary language is not English.

In May 2008, CDE convened a stakeholder committee consisting of leaders in K-12, early childhood and higher education as well as leaders from business and the military whose role was to advise the department on the development process and content of Colorado's new standards.

The standards writing process began with a review of national and international benchmarking and research. Using the research provided, over 200 Colorado educators and representatives from higher education and business participated in standards development subcommittees to design Colorado's new academic standards. Drafts of each set of standards were disseminated to the Colorado public and national content experts for review. In addition public feedback was gathered through regional feedback tours held throughout the state. After this review process, subcommittees

made revisions and the revised drafts were presented to the State Board of Education for adoption on December 10, 2009.

Also in 2009, the Council of Chief State School Officers (a non-partisan organization of state commissioners of education) and the National Governor's Association (a bi-partisan organization of state governors) came together to start the Common Core State Standards Initiative. The Common Core State Standards Initiative was an effort to develop voluntary standards in mathematics and English language arts that states could use to ensure all students graduated from high school college- and career-ready.

Colorado was among six states asked to provide early feedback on the initial drafts of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in July 2009. A subsequent gap analysis confirmed close alignment of the Colorado Academic Standards with Common Core State Standards.

State Board of Education adopts CCSS

The Colorado State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts on Aug. 2, 2010. The Common Core State Standards were woven into the Colorado Academic Standards.

In December 2010, CDE re-released the Colorado Academic Standards in mathematics and reading, writing and communicating inclusive of the entirety of the Common Core State Standards. In addition to the Common Core State Standards, the 2010 version of the Colorado Academic Standards in mathematics and reading, writing and communicating include components unique to Colorado. Some of these components (e.g., personal financial literacy in mathematics) are required by legislation; other components (e.g., research and reasoning in reading, writing and communicating) are included based on the recommendations of the Colorado standards subcommittees.

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia have signed on to the Common Core State Standards.

Connection to higher education in Colorado

Colorado Academic Standards have the power to reduce the need for remediation in college and by default, increase the number of students who successfully complete their postsecondary education in a timely fashion. Here is a sampling of higher ed initiatives linked to the state standards:

- **Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Endorsed Diplomas** - If students meet the criteria, some of which include completion of coursework based on Colorado Academic Standards, they will be college and career ready upon graduating from high school. This means better prepared students entering higher education and a reduction in the number of students who need

remediation. Learn more at http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/gg_diplomaendorsement

- **Assessments** - The 11th grade assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, which will replace the previous CSAP tests, will be a good indicator of students' college and career readiness. Ultimately, colleges and universities will be able to use students' scores on those tests to help determine if they meet admission requirements and to place them into appropriate coursework for their freshman year.
- **ICAPs** - Individualized Career and Academic Plans also help students demonstrate their college and career readiness insofar as their mastery of 21st Century Skills, which are:
 - Information literacy (e.g. find and use information and information technology)
 - Invention (e.g. creativity and innovation)
 - Collaboration (e.g. communication)
 - Critical thinking (e.g. problem solving, and global and cultural awareness)
 - Self-direction (e.g. personal responsibility, civic responsibility, work ethic)

High school counselors and advisors can use the students' ICAPs to help students determine their interests and select the best college degree Pathway for that student. University and college advisors can use ICAPs for admission and placement decisions. Learn more at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary>.

- **gtPathways** - High school teachers and higher ed faculty have been identifying areas of misalignment between where high school math and ELA leave off and gtPathways (freshman year coursework) math and ELA pick up. This information will be used to revise the current gtPathways content criteria and competencies for gtPathways math and ELA courses.
- **Educator preparation programs** - Candidates in educator preparation programs (whether to become teachers, principals, guidance counselors or other) are learning about the Colorado Academic Standards and assessments and will be prepared to implement those standards and assessments when they get jobs in Colorado school districts, resulting in better prepared educators who, in turn, will produce students who are college and career ready. Learn more at <http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/academics/TeacherEd/EdPrepProject.html>.
- **Transitional coursework** - Higher education faculty helped design "transitional coursework" aligned to the standards that high school seniors can take if the

11th grade assessment identifies them as not being on track to graduate college and career ready. These transitional courses in English Language Arts and math can be taken the senior year and are meant to prevent the need for remediation so that the student can enter directly into credit-bearing coursework once accepted into higher education. Learn more at <http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/remedial/>

Learn more at:

- http://www.cde.state.co.us/contentareas/ccss_in_the_colorado_standards#

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