



Colorado Academic Standards: Communicating with Parents and Community Members

The following tips and messages have been developed to help district leaders and educators communicate with parents, families and community leaders about the Colorado Academic Standards.

Messages for Parents and Families

Colorado has raised the bar to ensure all students receive a world-class education.

Academic standards set the expectation for what students need to know and be able to do by the end of each grade and subject. They form the foundation of what teachers teach and students learn in the classroom. Colorado has had standards for student learning for 20 years. In the 2013-14 school year, Colorado implemented revised academic standards, called the Colorado Academic Standards, in 10 content areas. The new standards are designed to prepare your child with the academic knowledge and skills needed to be successful in college, career and life.

The revised standards are important because they not only improve what your child learns, but how she or he learns by teaching critical-thinking, problem-solving and effective communication skills. They also better prepare your child to compete for the jobs of the future with students from around the world.

The revised standards bring greater opportunities for parent and family engagement.

The Colorado Academic Standards allow parents, students and teachers to be on the same page about student learning and to set high expectations together. When you know what your child will be learning in the classroom, you and your child's teacher can identify when your child needs extra help or needs more challenging work.

Tips for Communicating with Parents and Families

- Be positive and encouraging
- Focus on the benefits to students
- Empower parents to know what is happening in the classroom so they can help reinforce learning at home
- Avoid using jargon that only educators might understand
- Enable teachers and other parents to be the messengers of the standards; they are the most trusted communicators to parents

Tips to Support Parents' Efforts to Reinforce their Child's Learning at Home

Encourage parents in the great work they are doing:

- Setting and keeping high expectations
- Making education a top priority
- Talking with their kids about school and the topics explored each day in their classrooms
- Providing home environments for studying and completing homework
- Reading with their kids and/or designating a time for reading each day

Tips to Help Parents Support their Child's Learning at School

Let parents know that the revised standards create an opportunity to engage in ongoing conversations about their child's progress. Talking about their child's progress, not just at parent-teacher conferences or on curriculum nights, but year-round, will help build strong parent-teacher relationships. Parents can use the following questions to help kick-start conversations:



- What are the most important topics my child will be learning this year?
- Can I see a sample of my child's work? Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better?
- Is my child on track to be successful in this class, prepared for next year and for college and career?
- What resources are available if my child needs help or wants to learn more about a subject?

(Source: National PTA)

Messages for Community Leaders

The Colorado Academic Standards help strengthen Colorado's economy.

- The Colorado Academic Standards are critical to Colorado's economic development because they were designed to give all students today the knowledge and skills they will need to be prepared for the careers of tomorrow, including the ability to communicate effectively, work in groups, apply math in real-world situations, read and analyze both literature and informational text, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- The improved standards are an important step in building a stronger workforce in Colorado. They will help fuel innovation and strengthen the state's economy.
- The standards respond directly to the request from community leaders to have Colorado students be better prepared for the jobs of the future.

Tips for Communicating with Community Leaders

- Focus on the economic benefits:
 - By improving education, Colorado will have a stronger workforce.
 - A stronger talent pool will help attract and retain businesses to the state and to your community.
- Focus on the fact that the standards are internationally benchmarked, which means our students will be prepared to compete for jobs with students from around the world.
- Communicate how they and their staff can get involved to support education.

Tips to Share with Community Leaders Who Want to be Involved

Many local businesses and community leaders are eager to support local education endeavors. Share these strategies for getting involved:

- As employers, you can share information with your staff about the Colorado Academic Standards.
 - Include information in your employee newsletters, on your intranet or at an upcoming staff meeting.
 - Invite local education leaders to share how they can get involved as a community partner to support student learning (e.g., volunteering, tutoring and supporting their own children's education).
- As community leaders, you can help champion the revised standards and support education in your community by building relationships with your local schools, sharing information with your networks (Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.) and including information in your speaking engagements about the importance of the revised Colorado Academic Standards.

Additional Resources

For more information about the Colorado Academic Standards, visit the CDE website at www.cde.state.co.us.

- Brochure: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/academicstandardsbrochure-fullpage>
- Fact Sheets: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs-standards>
- Videos: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness/educationaljourneyvideoseries>
- Grade-Specific Guides: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/guidestok5standards>