What are standards?

Created by Coloradans for Colorado students, the Colorado Academic Standards provide a grade-by-grade road map to help ensure students are successful in college, careers and life.

The standards aim to improve what students learn and how they learn in 10 content areas:

- comprehensive health and physical education
- dance
- drama and theatre arts
- math
- music
- reading, writing and communicating
- science
- social studies
- visual arts
- world languages

The Colorado Academic Standards include the Common Core State Standards for English language arts (ELA) and math.

The standards emphasize critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, collaboration and communication as important life skills in the 21st century.

Bringing the standards to life

While the standards provide shared expectations for students across Colorado, they allow for local flexibility in how to reach and exceed those standards.

Through district- and teacher-created curriculum and lesson plans, teachers bring the standards to life, inspiring students to reach their full potential.

Examples from the standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Use evidence to develop a scientific explanation about how organisms depend on their habitat</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>Describe and analyze artistic intent using information about the culture, time in which the work was created, and artist</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Analyze and solve pairs of simultaneous linear equations</td>
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<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>Reading, Writing and Communicating</td>
<td>Relate a literary work to original historical documents of its literary period or historical setting</td>
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Why update our standards?

Standards are not new to Colorado. Standards have guided our schools and districts since 1993. In 2008, Colorado adopted Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids, an Act that called for the adoption of updated standards aimed at ensuring all students are prepared to succeed in college, careers and life. The standards provide the foundation for teachers to help all students achieve at higher levels and improve the college and career readiness of our students.

The need for updated standards

Only 25 percent of Colorado’s graduating class of 2016 met the ACT college readiness standards in all four subjects.

What is different about these standards?

Across all 10 content areas, the standards demand more of our students and teachers.

RIGOR
Students use inquiry, critical thinking and creative processes to solve problems.

RELEVANCY
Students engage in real world scenarios that require the application and transfer of knowledge and skills.

DISCIPLINARY LITERACY
Students learn to speak, think, work and argue like mathematicians, artists, scientists, authors and historians.

HUNDREDS OF COLORADANS ENGAGED IN A MULTI-YEAR PROCESS TO UPDATE THE STANDARDS.

The 2013-14 school year was the first year the updated standards were fully implemented in our schools.

What teachers are saying

“I want the same thing as my students’ parents want—for every single child to achieve the greatest amount of success possible. And the new, higher standards help me focus on teaching important skills like critical thinking, analysis and problem solving to create a generation of thinkers who will be successful not only grade-to-grade, but in whatever they ultimately decide to do after graduation.”
- Lauren Fine, McGlone Elementary, Denver Public Schools, 5th Grade Literacy Teacher & Coach

“The new standards require a more complex interaction with the material. For instance, we can’t just ask students to identify the traits of the main character of a story but instead, must ask how those traits lead to multiple or conflicting motivations and how this in turn develops the theme.”
- Jonathan Wright, Boulder High School, Language Arts Teacher

“The Colorado Academic Standards present a shift in thinking about social studies education. The new focus on 21st century skills as well as relevance and application requires adjustments to methods and strategies used in the classroom.”
- Jill Martinez, Del Norte Middle School, Social Studies Teacher
How will we know if our students are meeting the standards?

Rigorous academic standards go hand in hand with meaningful and relevant tests. The state’s new tests, called the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS), measure students’ mastery of the standards and the complex thinking and other critical skills students need to be successful in school and in life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why are tests important?</th>
<th>What tests will students take?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents should know whether or not their children are gaining the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today’s complex world. CMAS is the only common measurement for Colorado students, helping teachers and parents understand whether students have mastered the content they need to know by the end of each school year in order to be on track for college and career success. Parents can also use CMAS scores to see how their students and schools are doing compared to other students and schools across the district, and the state.</td>
<td>ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MATH</td>
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<td>SOCIAL STUDIES</td>
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<td>(sampling approximately 1/3 of schools participating)</td>
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<td>SCIENCE</td>
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