

History and Development Process for the Colorado Academic Standards

History of Standards in Colorado

Standards for student learning are not new in Colorado. Passed in 1993, House Bill 93-1313 initiated standards based education in Colorado. The statute required the state to create standards in reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, civics, geography, economics, art, music and physical education. The statute also originated the Colorado student assessment program in 1996.

Why Standards? State standards for student learning define what students should know and be able to do at the end of a grade level or grade span. 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: Colorado Initiated, Colorado Driven

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 academic standards in ten content areas: dance, drama and theater arts; mathematics; music; reading, writing and communicating; science; social studies; visual arts; world languages and English language proficiency standards. In addition to requiring Colorado to revise the content of its standards, CAP4K called for inclusion of 21st century skills and standards that would result in postsecondary and workforce readiness for all Colorado students.

Public Engagement: 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. Each stakeholder committee meeting was publicized in advance, open to the public and followed up with detailed minutes posted to CDE's website. The parameters of research-based, inclusiveness and transparency were visible throughout the steps of the revision process.

Coloradans received an open invitation to participate in the standards revision process which yielded more than 700 applications from eligible candidates in K-12, early childhood, higher education, business, military, librarians and parents. Two-hundred fifty citizens were selected through a name-blind process to participate on ten content specific subcommittees.

CDE conducted five series of public meetings in 10-13 Colorado cities between 2008 and 2010 to engage the public in providing input on the process and content of Colorado's new standards. In the first series, Coloradans had the opportunity to provide input on a variety of elements in the standards, including but not limited to, 21st century skills and the descriptions of postsecondary and workforce readiness and school readiness. Three more public feedback tours were conducted to focus on specific content areas. The fifth series was designed to solicit teacher input regarding the implementation of the new Colorado Academic Standards.

Standards Development Process: The standards writing process began with an analysis of old Colorado standards compared to national and international benchmarks and educational research appropriate for each content area. [Content specific reports are available on the CDE website](#). Reference of the benchmarking states and nations used as well as other resources and research can be found within the introduction of each of the [Colorado Academic Standards](#) documents.

Using the research provided, over 250 Colorado education professionals, business professionals and parents participated on standards development subcommittees to write Colorado's new academic standards. The names of the subcommittee members are also included in the [standards documents](#).

Drafts of each set of standards were disseminated to the Colorado public and national content experts for review. In addition to public feedback gathered through feedback meetings held throughout the state, individuals could provide line by line recommendations on each draft through an online feedback system. After this review process, subcommittees made final revisions and the revised drafts were presented to the State Board of Education for adoption on December 10, 2009.

Common Core State Standards Initiative: Colorado's Involvement and Decision Making

Development Process: In 2009, while CDE was engaged in the standards development initiated by Colorado legislation, 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](#) (CCSS) initiative. The CCSS initiative was an effort to develop voluntary, national standards in mathematics and English language arts.

Given that Colorado was concurrently developing its own college and career ready standards, Colorado was among six states asked to provide early feedback on the initial drafts of the CCSS in July 2009. CDE also reviewed the two publicly released drafts of the Common Core State Standards. Colorado was able to inform the conversation on the Common Core State Standards based on CDE's previous experiences and decisions related to writing 21st century standards. Colorado also benefited from the conversation. The concurrent development process of the CCSS and the Colorado Academic Standards as well as both processes being research based and appropriately benchmarked resulted in two sets of standards that were very closely aligned.

Comparison of the 2009 Colorado Academic Standards and the Common Core State Standards: Following the release of the Common Core State Standards in June 2010, the department engaged the Assessment and Standards Development Services program at WestEd to conduct a gap analysis comparing the 2009 version of the Colorado Academic Standards in mathematics and reading, writing and communicating with the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts. The methodology was two-fold. First, WestEd provided an annotated version of the Colorado Academic Standards in [mathematics](#) and [reading, writing and communicating](#), identifying gaps and inconsistencies between the Common Core State Standards and the 2009 Colorado Academic Standards. Second, WestEd provided a summary of findings from the gap analysis in [mathematics](#) and [reading, writing and communicating](#).

The gap analysis confirmed the close alignment of the Colorado Academic Standards with Common Core State Standards. However, the report noted some critical instructional elements which existed in the Common Core State Standards, but were not evident in the 2009 Colorado Academic Standards. In addition, the report recommends inconsistencies between the two sets of standards be considered and reconciled, where appropriate, to benefit Colorado teachers and students.

2010 Colorado Academic Standards: The Best for Colorado

The Colorado State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts on August 2, 2010. This decision was made with the expectation that CDE would honor the work and values of the Colorado Academic Standards previously written by Colorado educators and adopted by the board to create the best mathematics and reading, writing and communicating standards for the State of Colorado. From August to December 2010, CDE engaged the mathematics and reading, writing and communicating subcommittees to assist in integrating the Common Core State Standards within 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. Integrating the Common Core State Standards and maintaining rich Colorado specific values resulted in a set of standards that is best for the success of Colorado's teachers and students.

Where can I learn more?

- CDE Standards website: www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction
- Additional CDE fact sheets: www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs
- Achieve: www.achieve.org

The Colorado Department of Education

CONNECTING . . . *rigorous academic standards . . . meaningful assessments . . .*
engaging learning options . . . excellent educators . . . for STUDENT SUCCESS