



Family Guide to Student Success

We all have high hopes for our children. We want them to do well in school. We want them to grow up to be loving, responsible adults who graduate from high school ready for the next step — whether that is going to college or starting a career.

As a parent, family member, or caregiver, there is a lot you can do today to help shape your child's future.

1. Let your child know that education matters — that it's the foundation for his/her success.
2. Know what your child is expected to learn at each grade level.
3. Talk to your child about what is happening in school to make sure he/she is making progress throughout the year.

The Family Guide to Student Success is designed to provide families the tools they need to support learning at home and to develop partnerships with teachers. Our hope is that this guide will answer questions you may have as well as open the door for further discussion with your child's teacher.



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What are academic standards and why are they important?

Colorado state academic standards are the expectations of what students need to know and be able to do. They also express what Colorado sees as the future skills and essential knowledge for our next generation to be successful.

Academic standards are important because they help ensure that all students are prepared for success in college and the workforce. They provide a framework of clear and

consistent expectations for students, parents, and teachers; assist in building your child's knowledge and skills; and set high goals for all students.

While high standards are not the only thing needed for our children's success, they provide an important first step for teachers, parents, and students. Having clearly defined learning goals helps families and teachers work together to ensure that students succeed. Standards help parents and teachers know when students need extra assistance or when they need to be challenged to a greater degree. They also help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.

What Parents Should Know About Standards

Here are six key reasons parents should be in the know about the academic standards:

1. **Standards set clear, high expectations for student achievement.** Standards tell what students need to do in order to progress through school on grade level.
2. **Standards guide efforts to measure student achievement.** Results of tests aligned with grade-level academic standards show if students have learned and teachers have taught for mastery.
3. **Standards promote educational equity for all.** Instruction in every school in the state will be based on the same academic standards.



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Knowledge of the academic standards helps parents understand more about what their child is learning and the academic expectations at each grade level. Parents are able to have conversations with teachers about student progress in specific areas and understand more completely the progress of their child.

4. **Standards inform parents about the academic expectations for their child.** Standards give parents more specific information for helping their child at home. Standards can be used as a tool to help parents determine the type of help their student may need to do better in school – no more guessing!
5. **Standards enable parents to participate more actively in parent/teacher conferences.**
6. **Standards help parents see how the current grade level expectations are related to successive years' expectations.** Parents are able to see how their child's knowledge is growing from one year to the next.

How do academic standards connect to the curriculum in your child's classroom?

Teaching, learning, and testing must connect to the academic standards. Each day, classroom teachers refer to a plan, called a curriculum, which outlines what a child should learn over the course of the year. Every school year, children deepen their knowledge of a subject by learning new concepts based upon what they learned in the past.

Children learn differently. Some enjoy learning by reading, examining things or listening to explanations. Others learn best by listening to someone speak. And some learn most when they can use their hands or bodies. In order to ensure that the needs of all children in the classroom are met, a teacher utilizes the curriculum in a number of different ways. The curriculum used in your child's classroom prepares your child to meet the standards. The standards define what children should learn at certain points in time and what performances are accepted as evidence that your child has learned.

The stronger the home-school connection is at all levels, the more prepared children are to meet the standards.



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What are assessments and why are they important?

Schools use many ways to assess, or measure, the progress of students: homework, class work, projects, writings, portfolios, unit tests and district assessments are all different types of student work that can be analyzed to determine a student's level of success.

Assessment data is gathered to inform and guide instruction. There are numerous levels of assessments that are used to gather this data.

State

- The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) is based on Colorado academic standards, and results are reported in terms of proficiency. For example, a fourth-grade student's score on the statewide mathematics test will be reported in terms of the standards established for learning at fourth grade.

CSAP is administered statewide in four subject areas:

1. reading (grades 3-10)
2. writing (grades 3-10)
3. mathematics (grades 3-10)
4. science (grades 5, 8, 10)

- All 11th grade students in Colorado take the ACT as an indicator of college readiness.

The state test scores show the child's achievement towards the standards in the tested areas. Although the state tests do a good job of measuring student achievement of the standards, one test alone cannot measure everything that a child has learned. It is important to remember that CSAP tests a student's achievement at one point in time; but to also recognize that this is a valuable piece of data, when put together with other data and evidence collected in the classroom, which helps the teacher identify areas of strength for a child and areas of improvement.

District

- The Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) was enacted by the Colorado State Legislature to ensure that all students by the third grade have the literacy skills essential for success in school and life. CBLA requires that local school districts identify students who are reading below grade level and provide necessary reading interventions. To determine the literacy skill-level of students, Thompson School District uses DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) for all students in grades K-3. For students who struggle to reach our established benchmarks, the DRA2 or other diagnostic assessment is used for more in-depth assessment purposes.
- In grades 3-10, Acuity is used for reading and math. This assessment is aligned with the state standards, and is used to predict future performance on CSAP. Students take the test online three times per year (September, November and January).
- Explore is given to all 8th graders to assist them in developing a course plan for high school, as well as supporting them as they prepare for post-graduation.
- PLAN is given to all 10th graders to help them measure current academic development, explore career/training options, and make plans for their remaining years of high school and post-graduation years.

Some students with special education needs may be able to take the state and district tests with accommodations or may participate in alternate assessments according to accommodations described in their individual education plans (IEP). For more information on testing students with special needs, please see http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/parents/Accomms_CSAP_Brochure.pdf

Classroom

- Summative Assessments—*Summative assessments* are typically used to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and services at the end of an academic year or at a pre-determined time.
- Formative Assessments—*Formative assessments* are on-going assessments, reviews, and observations in a classroom.
- Quizzes
- Homework
- Classwork
- Writing Samples
- Projects



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What You Should Know About Your Child's Assessments:

- 1. The Colorado Basic Literacy Act requires that district assessments assess students on basic literacy skills which begin in Kindergarten.**

Some of the skills assessed are letter naming, phonemic awareness, phonics and oral reading fluency.

- 2. If your child scores below benchmark on CBLA measures, even in Kindergarten, you should be concerned.**

A below benchmark score in grades K-3 is an early warning that your child may need help developing the basic early literacy skills required for that grade level. Talk to your child's teacher about what skills and knowledge need additional work. Ask the teacher for learning ideas you can do at home.

- 3. The state tests will assess students on the Colorado Academic Standards in four areas: reading, writing, mathematics, science.**

Colorado Academic Standards form the basis for the state tests and are based on the National Common Core standards. The Colorado Department of Education adopted these standards on in 2010 for reading and writing, mathematics, and science.

- 4. If your child scores at a lower proficiency level on CSAP, even in grade 3, you should be concerned.**

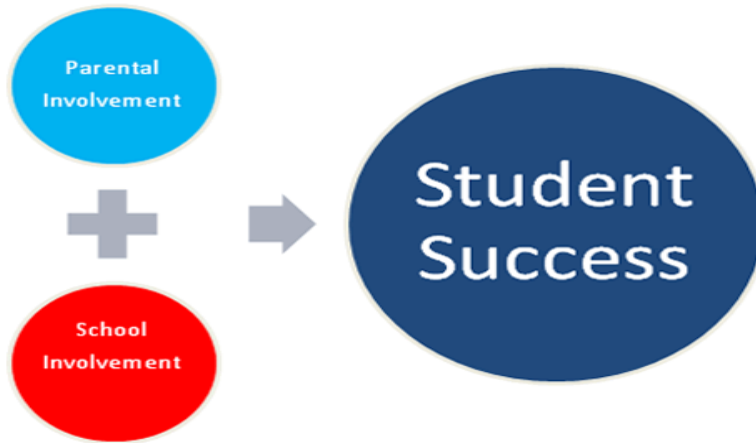
A low proficiency score in grade 3 is an early warning that your child may need help developing the knowledge and skills required for that grade level. Talk to your child's teacher about what skills and knowledge need additional work. Ask the teacher for learning ideas you can do at home or for strategies to improve study skills.

5. Acuity, Explore, PLAN, and ACT results will be provided to you.

Please review these results with your child. Use this data as a platform to discuss strengths, areas of interest and areas in which they may need additional supports.

6. You can be an advocate for your child and your school.

Get involved in school improvement and policy making. Attend school board meetings. Volunteer to serve on task forces, committees, and in your child's classroom. Encourage other parents to get involved, too. Your presence will help the school be more responsive to families' natural desires to help their children learn.



For more information visit

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/csap/csap_plds.html

Check out the U.S. Department of Education website at <http://ed.gov> for many learning resources and ideas for parents. Always feel free to talk to your child's teachers about other learning strategies you can use at home.