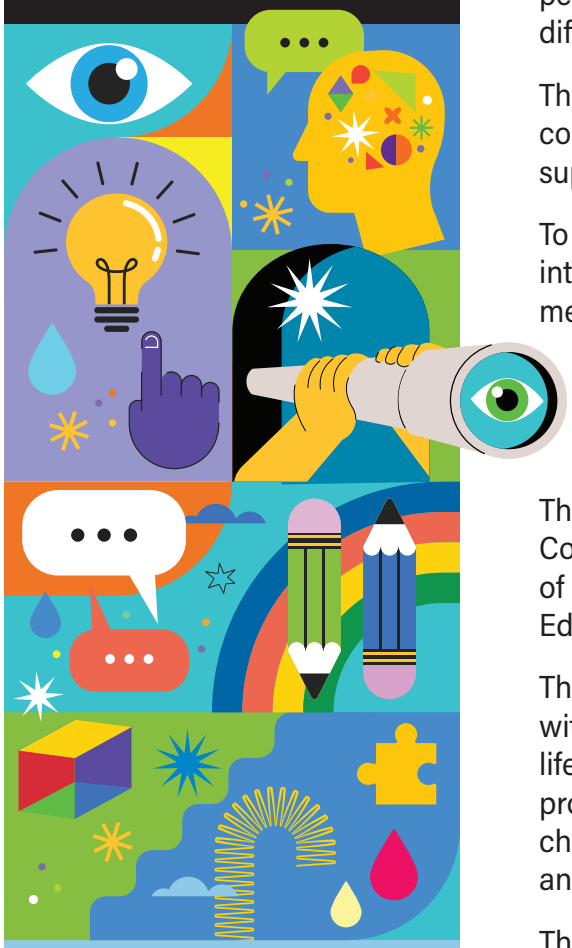
9-12

High School



cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction

Supporting Student Success

Academic Advice for Parents, Families, Caretakers, and Communities

Supporting student learning is a shared effort between caregivers and educators. Many things can influence how students develop, learn, and perform in school. A strong support system can make a meaningful difference in their success.

This guide provides ideas and questions to help strengthen the connection between home and school, helping students receive the support they need to thrive.

To get the most from this resource, think about how the suggestions fit into your daily routines and conversations. These prompts can spark meaningful discussions with your child and their teachers.

About This Guide and the Colorado Academic Standards

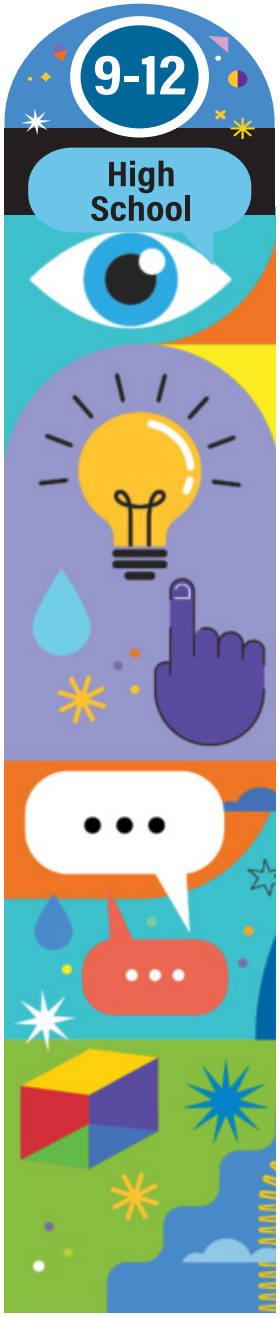
This guide was developed by academic content specialists at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) with input from CDE's Office of Family, Community, and School Partnerships, CDE's Office of Migrant Education Programs, and other family and student advocacy groups.

The Colorado Academic Standards and Essential Skills provide educators with a road map to help students find success in college, careers, and life. The essential skills, as outlined in Colorado law, include creativity, problem solving, social and cultural awareness, civic engagement, character and leadership, and the use of technology to gather, evaluate, and communicate information.

The best place to learn about what your child is learning is from your child's teacher and school. The standards are written for professional educators and your child's teacher can help you understand what the standards mean for your student. In Colorado, teachers and schools make decisions about the materials, methods, and courses used to help your student reach the goals described by the standards.

If you want to learn more about Colorado's standards and access other guides, contact the content specialists in CDE's Office of Standards and Instructional Support using the QR code to the left or visit the CDE website.

COLORADO
Department of Education



Colorado Academic Standards and Essential Skills for Grades 9-12

This guide organizes Colorado's standards for 9-12 students into 13 content areas across four groups:

The Arts

Dance focuses on performing intermediate and advanced dance movements, creating dance, using dance movements from different times and cultures to create new dances, and explaining personal, cultural, and societal connections to dance.

Drama and Theatre Arts focuses on creating and performing characters or scenes, exploring technical and design elements of theatre - such as sound, lighting, and set design - applying research to enhance performance and production, and using self-reflection to support continuous improvement.

Music focuses on performing music independently and with others, creating music independently and with others, applying the ability to read and interpret musical notation, and understanding the context in which music is created and performed.

Visual Arts focuses on refining technical skills and personal expression while analyzing and exploring art in historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Humanities

Reading, Writing, and Communicating focuses on interpreting and evaluating complex texts and concepts. Students also write to examine, analyze, and convey different ideas and understandings of texts.

Social Studies focuses on an in-depth study of United States and world history, geographic concepts, economic principles, and civic ideals.

World Languages focuses on helping students have conversations confidently and naturally, understand key ideas in both spoken and written language, talk about familiar topics, and feel ready for meaningful interactions in everyday life.



Colorado Academic Standards and Essential Skills for Grades 9-12, continued

STEM

Computer Science focuses on expanding knowledge and skills around computational thinking, computing systems and networks, computer programming, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, and digital citizenship.

Mathematics focuses on functions and statistical modeling, which is a way of using equations to describe how inputs relate to outputs in the world. Students also prove and apply geometric theorems.

Science focuses on deepening students' understanding and application of scientific practices across physical, life, and earth/space sciences. Students use scientific inquiry and modeling to explore complex topics like atomic structure, forces and interactions, energy, ecosystems, evolution, Earth systems, and human impacts.

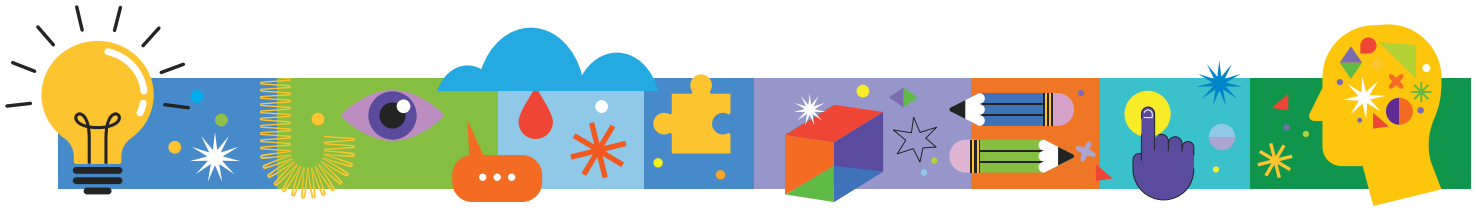
Wellness

Comprehensive Health focuses on promoting health by helping students make informed decisions and develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to lead healthy lives.

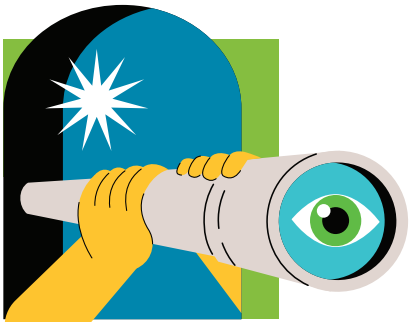
Financial Literacy focuses on teaching financial knowledge around topics including budgeting, saving, earning, debt, taxes, investing, and insurance, as well as being reflective around personal financial decision-making.

Physical Education focuses on promoting lifelong physical activity, health, and well-being by developing the knowledge and skills necessary for physical fitness and healthy lifestyles. The goal is to create well-rounded individuals who can maintain or improve active, health-conscious lifestyles.

The Arts



The visual and performing arts standards reflect the knowledge and creativity required to produce a work of art. Students are expected to study art in different forms, such as dance, theatre, music, and visual arts, and participate in each by creating, performing, and presenting art while responding to the art of others and making connections between works of art and the world around them.



Ways You Can Help Your Student at Home

Students in grades 9-12 engage with art daily through the media they consume, the music they listen to, and the creative interactions they share with friends and family. Supporting their growth as artists can be as simple as helping them see art in their everyday world, encouraging self-expression through music, visual, and performing arts and fostering discussions about the role of art in cultures and societies. Here are some suggestions for helping your student create, enjoy, and perform art:

- Explore cultural issues through dance, drama, music, and the visual arts.
- Identify ways that dance, drama, music, and the visual arts help us to understand history.
- Talk about jobs and careers related to visual and performing arts.
- Volunteer for arts events in your community.
- Support your student's artistic leadership inside and outside of school.
- Discuss ways that collaboration, critical thinking, and analysis are incorporated into dance, drama, music, and visual arts.
- Help students identify goals and find ways to continue their own artistic path in and beyond school.
- Encourage students to imagine how arts connect to the real world.
- Encourage their creative and artistic endeavors for self-reflection purposes.
- Encourage deeper exploration and skill development in a chosen artistic medium and its techniques.
- Look for and attend visual and performing arts events in your local community.

The Arts

Tips for Successful Communication

You can help your student succeed by communicating openly with them and their teachers. Here are some suggestions.





Ask your student:

- How is technology changing the way the arts are created and experienced?
- What specific skills are you focusing on developing in the arts?
- What educational pathways or training programs might help you achieve your artistic goals?

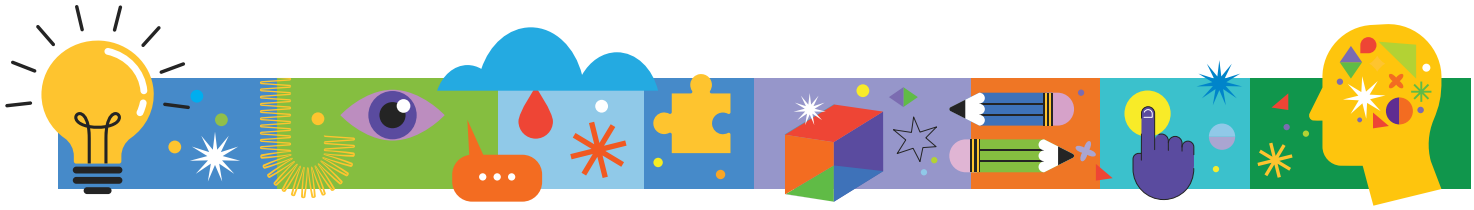
Ask your student's teacher:

- Has my student demonstrated an interest or talent in career pathways focused on the arts?
- How are collaboration, critical thinking, and analysis skills incorporated into the curriculum?
- What are ways that I can support the visual and performing arts at home?

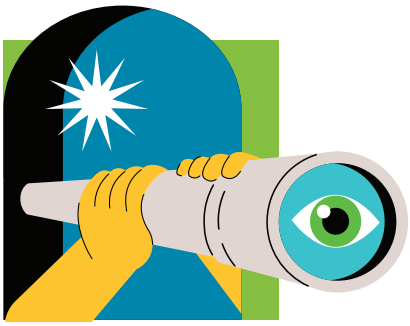




Humanities



The standards in the humanities promote critical thinking, effective communication, and understanding diverse perspectives. The content areas of reading, writing, and communicating, social studies, and world languages are essential for developing skills like problem-solving, civic engagement, cultural awareness, preparing students for a successful future. Overall, these standards emphasize the importance of language, critical thinking, and cultural understanding for a well-rounded education.



Ways You Can Help Your Student at Home

Students in grades 9-12 explore critical thinking, communication, and different viewpoints through reading, writing, social studies, and world languages. Students build problem-solving skills and learn about different cultures, preparing them to be active in their communities and successful in their future careers. Here are some helpful strategies to support your student in the humanities:

- Choose how to introduce and compare ways the New Year (or another holiday) is celebrated around the world including the time of year, activities, foods, and more.
- Choose a social or global issue to research and summarize their learning with facts, resources, and ideas.
- Choose a historical film or song from a different culture or language, research its historical context, and reflect on how it represents that event and compares to similar works from your own culture.
- Encourage reflection by asking open-ended questions such as "How might this be viewed from another cultural perspective?" after engaging with thought-provoking content.
- Research a current event in another country and create a news report or podcast discussing its significance, inviting friends or family to share their perspectives on how it compares to their own experiences or historical events.
- Encourage your student to ask questions and suggest thinking about where the answer might be found.
- Watch foreign language films or shows with subtitles in the same language to enhance listening skills and cultural understanding while following along with the storyline.
- Find opportunities, such as elections or televised political debates, to discuss views regarding political issues and how those views impact decision-making in the election process.

Humanities

Tips for Successful Communication

You can help your student succeed by communicating openly with them and their teachers. Here are some suggestions.

Ask your student:

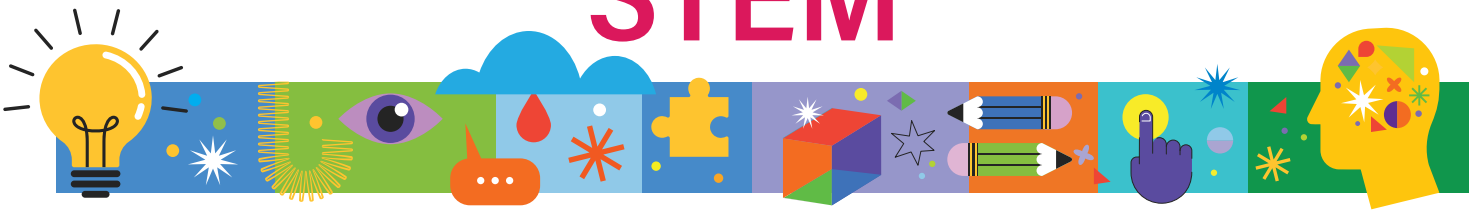
- How can we use text to remember what happened at an event?
- What kinds of things in the news are interesting to you?
- What language do you want to learn?



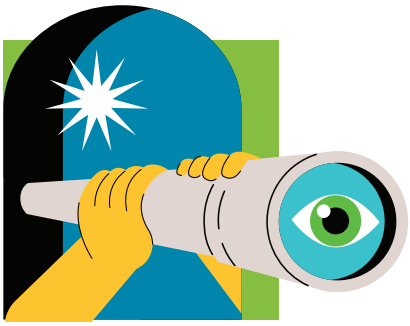
Ask your student's teacher:

- Is my student able to find and evaluate potential resources effectively?
- Is my student able to draw connections between what they learn about historical events and current issues?
- How does my student demonstrate their understanding of global issues and cultures in their work?
- Are there particular social studies topics that my student has expressed an interest in?
- Are there projects that capture my student's interest showing potential for a future career/work related to these subjects?
- Are there extracurricular activities related to humanities that my child has shown a strong interest in?

STEM



The standards for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) emphasize the importance of real-world applications, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Computer science focuses on computational thinking, systems, programming, and societal impact. People use mathematics to reason with numbers and shapes and their representations to make sense of their world. Science is a process that is used to address real world problems and make people's lives better by applying authentic science and engineering practices.



Ways You Can Help Your Student at Home

Students in grades 9-12 deepen their understanding of complex scientific principles, computational thinking, and mathematical modeling. They analyze data, explore the impact of technology on society, and apply advanced concepts in mathematics and science through real-world applications. Students enhance their problem-solving skills and engage in discussions about various careers, examining how their studies relate to potential future pathways. Here are some strategies to help your student engage in STEM:

- Emphasize that math and science are not just subjects to be learned, but something that people do to make sense of the world and solve problems. A positive STEM identity—even for students whose primary interests lie elsewhere—is a healthy thing to have.
- It is okay if your student is studying STEM topics that you do not understand. Be positive! Research shows that negative parent attitudes (saying things like "I was never good at math" and "Why are you taking chemistry if you're never going to use it?") can result in your student adopting negative attitudes and having lower performance in school.
- Talk about how STEM skills, such as data analysis and computational thinking, are relevant to many different careers, and not just careers traditionally identified as STEM.
- Advise your student to choose STEM courses and electives that are relevant to their interests and to their futures, whether that be a college major they intend to choose or a career path to follow after high school.
- Encourage your student's interest in science, math, and technology by getting library books, watching TV shows, or visiting museums about these topics. Your school or community may have clubs, maker spaces, and/or mentors that can help foster a stronger interest in STEM.
- Help your student think about the science behind making video games and movies, and how coding and graphic design skills help creators find solutions to problems.

STEM

Tips for Successful Communication

You can help your student succeed by communicating openly with them and their teachers. Here are some suggestions.

Ask your student:

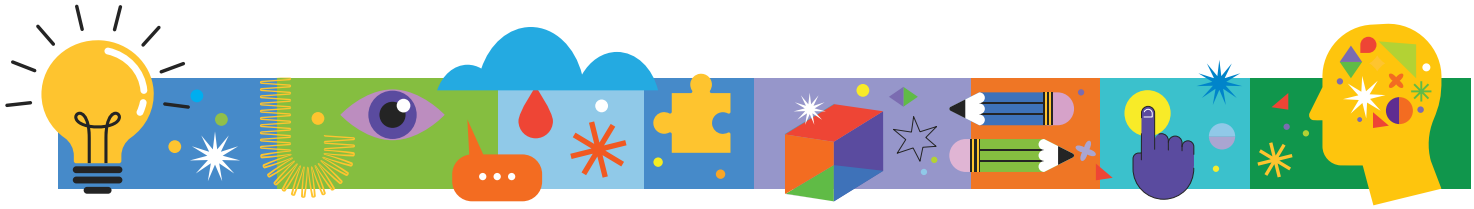
- If you could invent anything, what do you think it would be?
  - What would its impact be on you and others?
  - How do you think it connects to things we see or experience every day?
- Have you learned about any scientific advancements that could change the way we live in the future? How do you think that might affect your life?
- Do you notice math and statistics being used in misleading ways, like in advertising or biased reporting? What have you learned about math and statistics that helps you know when a source might not be truthful?

Ask your student's teacher:

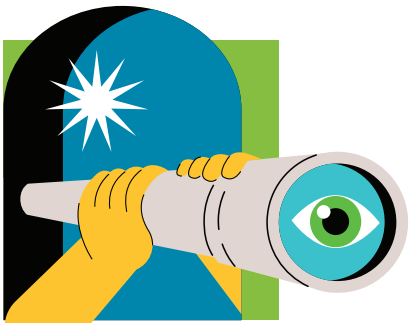
- Are there opportunities for students to explore interdisciplinary STEM fields like bioengineering, data science, or environmental science?
- Does my student actively participate in class discussions and problem-solving activities related to STEM?
- How well does my student demonstrate critical thinking and analytical skills in applying STEM concepts?
- Are there areas of STEM where my student may need additional support, or where they excel and could benefit from more challenging opportunities, such as advanced courses or independent research?



Wellness



The wellness standards promote holistic well-being by focusing on personal health, financial literacy, and physical education. The health standards emphasize emotional, social, and physical health, while personal financial literacy teaches students about money management and decision-making. Physical education promotes healthy lifestyles, physical literacy, and personal responsibility. Together, these standards help students develop essential skills for navigating today's world and leading healthy, fulfilling lives.



Ways You Can Help Your Student at Home

Students in grades 9-12 discuss the importance of balanced nutrition and decision-making, while practicing consent, conflict resolution, and negotiation skills. They are encouraged to engage in physical activities and stress management while exploring lifelong fitness options. Students engage in financial planning through budgeting, saving, and job opportunities, while discussing post-high school goals and how education impacts future earnings. They also collaborate to improve health and wellness in the community. Here are some suggestions for helping your student learn to manage their wellness:

- Help your student plan how to save money for big purchases they want to make.
- Discuss the importance of eating a variety of foods and balanced nutrition.
- Identify factors influencing decisions and discuss a decision-making process.
- Create a plan for improving health and wellness in your family, neighborhood, or community.
- Identify situations where consent and refusal are important, and practice how to express both effectively.
- Discuss how to effectively manage conflict and use negotiation skills.
- Discuss situations when someone might be in danger of harming themselves or others and how to get help in your school or community.
- Encourage your student to take on a paying job, whether formal (like a cashier) or informal (such as mowing lawns), and to save at least 20% of their earnings in a savings account.
- Discuss budgeting decisions in your family and personal budgeting needs.
- Talk about goals after high school and the relationship among continuing education, job training, and future earning potential.
- Discuss the effect of stress and anxiety and explore steps to manage and control them.
- Research and participate in a variety of self-selected physical activities, considering the value of each as it relates to personal fitness goals.

Wellness

Tips for Successful Communication

You can help your student succeed by communicating openly with them and their teachers. Here are some suggestions.

Ask your student:

- What are some ways you can identify and express your feelings in a healthy way?
- Financial scams and identity theft are real threats. How can you protect yourself and your information?
- How do you think staying active can benefit you in the future, beyond just fulfilling physical education requirements?

Ask your student's teacher:

- Do you incorporate any lessons about mental health awareness and self-care strategies?
- How do you help students develop a plan for staying healthy and active in high school?
- How do you teach students about responsible credit card use, managing student loans and understanding investment basics?
- How do you teach students to recognize when they need help and encourage them to seek support for their mental and physical health?

