2026 NATIONAL REPORT CARD

Colorado

CLASS OF 2026 GRADE: C

PROJECTED CLASS OF 2030 GRADE: A

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Is a high school course with personal finance concepts required to be taken as a graduation requirement?

No, a specifically identified course with personal finance concepts is not a graduation requirement for the Class of 2026. High school graduation requirements are set by local school boards. The State Board of Education has created Graduation Guidelines that include the requirement that each student must create an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP), which includes career-oriented financial literacy concepts. *NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report indicates* that 9.8% of Colorado high school students attend schools where they are required to take a standalone half-year course in personal finance as a local graduation requirement, and about 50% of high schools offer a standalone personal finance course as an elective. The report also notes that 34.3% of students attend high schools where financial literacy content is embedded in another course (e.g., an economics course) and that 5.8% of students attend high schools that appear to have no class offering with personal finance content.

Sources:

- Financial Literacy Social Studies Standards
- Graduation Guidelines
- Graduation Guidelines FAQs
- NGPF's 2026 State of Financial Education Report

PRE-K TO GRADE EIGHT EDUCATION STANDARDS

Local school districts are strongly encouraged to teach personal finance topics in grades Pre-K to eight. The state's approved social studies standards for these grades includes personal financial literacy topics.

Sources:

- Financial Literacy Social Studies Standards

PROJECTED GRADE FOR CLASS OF 2030

Grade A for the Class of 2030. In May of 2025, the governor signed HB 25-1192 into law. The law requires students who enter ninth grade on or after September 1, 2026 (the Class of 2030), to complete a financial literacy course as a public high school graduation requirement. The course must incorporate all of the financial literacy standards developed by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). A CDE factsheet indicates that *"all the high school financial literacy standards must be included in a course that is either already a graduation requirement or that is made a graduation requirement going forward (e.g., a course in social studies, math, economics, etc.). To accomplish this requirement, all high school financial literacy standards must be taught within a single course, but that course is not required to be called financial literacy. A school district may also implement a standalone financial literacy course that is required for graduation. Although the financial literacy requirements of HB 25-1192 are in effect for the 2025-26 school year, the legislature gave broad discretion to schools and districts on how they implement this requirement. This is captured in the legislative intent where it states that "local education*

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Colorado

CLASS OF 2026 GRADE

C

PROJECTED CLASS OF 2030 GRADE

A

providers have broad discretion to determine the method of implementing a financial literacy course...and [any] existing local graduation requirements a financial literacy course may fulfill.'" The law also requires that beginning with the graduating Class of 2028, students in their graduating year, as part of each student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP) must have exposure to federal financial aid eligibility tools and net price calculators and practices for filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Colorado Application for State Financial Aid (CAFSA). The goal of this requirement is to ensure that students know how to fill out these forms if the student intends to seek postsecondary degree credentials. This requirement is waived if the adult student or such student's parents or guardians affirmatively declines to practice filling out the applications or if school personnel determine it is not feasible for the student to practice filling out the application.

Sources:

- HB 25-1192

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION STANDARDS

By law the State Board of Education is required to adopt standards that identify the knowledge and skills that a student should acquire as the student progresses from preschool through elementary and secondary education. Local school districts are required to align their curriculum in their schools to these standards. State law requires grade nine to 12 financial literacy standards include certain concepts such as an understanding of the following higher education topics: expected career income, financial aid, student loans, scholarships, and grant programs. In 2022, the state board-adopted social studies standards have five content areas: history, geography, civics, and personal financial literacy. State law strongly encourages (but does not require) local school boards to: (i) adopt financial literacy curriculum for grades K to 12; (ii) select mathematics and economics textbooks that include financial literacy content; and (iii) require the successful completion of a course in financial literacy as a graduation requirement. Graduation Guidelines require student implementation (by grade nine and through grade 12) of the ICAP. Career related financial literacy topics are part of the ICAP requirements. The CDE notes that *"ICAP is a multiyear process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills to create their own meaningful and powerful pathways to Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR)."* PWR occurs when a graduate is able to *"demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens."*

Sources:

- Financial Literacy Social Studies Standards
- Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)
- C.R.S. 22-7-1005
- C.R.S. 22-32-135
- 1 CCR 301-81

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CLASS OF 2026 GRADE	PROJECTED CLASS OF 2030 GRADE
C	A

EXTRA CREDIT

Colorado law requires the CDE to provide online financial literacy resources for teachers and school districts. The 2025 law provides funding for the new financial literacy course requirement. For Fiscal Year 2025-26, the bill requires and includes an appropriation of approximately $210,000 to the CDE. The bill requires the CDE to distribute money to support school districts that do not currently offer a financial literacy course based on a formula that CDE determines. The act authorizes the CDE to seek, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations for the purpose of supporting educators in implementing a financial literacy course. Next Gen Personal Finance is offering $500 stipends to educators who complete at least 20 hours of their free professional development (PD). Stipends will be available for up to 400 active Colorado public high school teachers.

Sources:

- C.R.S. 22-2-127
- Personal Financial Literacy Resource Bank
- HB 25-1192
- Fiscal Note Legislative Council
- Next Gen Personal Finance Stipends

CAVEAT

When the new mandate is fully implemented for the Class of 2030, it is unclear how Colorado will ensure that each local school district is, in fact, delivering the equivalent of a half-year course in personal finance, particularly in local school districts that do not offer a standalone personal finance course and are embedding this content on another course, like economics. Each local school district is responsible for implementing this new requirement and maximum flexibility has been given to these districts by regulators. This lack of uniformity in how this financial literacy requirement will be implemented will be closely monitored in our future reports. It is not clear how Colorado measures student achievement in financial literacy or how the state monitors the equitable implementation of local school district implementation of the ICAP financial literacy education requirement.