Guide Information

Teacher Conversation Guide

2026 CSTA PK–12 Computer Science Standards

Purpose

The 2026 CSTA PK–12 CS Standards represent a significant and exciting update to how we think about computer science education—from kindergarten through high school. As a CS educator, you are often the bridge between what these standards mean on paper and what they look like in practice.

This guide gives you language, framing, and talking points to help you have productive conversations with three key audiences: your administrator, a curriculum or materials reviewer, and your non-CS colleagues. Each section is designed to be skimmable before a meeting and usable as a leave-behind.

What's in this guide:

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Section 1: Talking with your Administrator

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Administrators are focused on policy, pathways, equity, and school-level outcomes. They may not know the details of the 2026 standards yet, but they care deeply about what they mean for students, staffing, and scheduling. Use this section to open the door.

What Administrators Most Need to Know

- The 2026 CSTA PK–12 CS Standards are the most comprehensive update to national CS education standards in nearly a decade.
- They are organized around concepts, practices, and dispositions—recognizing that CS isn't just about coding, but about how students think, collaborate, and engage with technology responsibly.
- The standards are grade-level specific in elementary (PK–5) and organized by grade band in middle and high school—giving schools design flexibility.
- AI is integrated throughout—not siloed—alongside a strong emphasis on ethics, equity, and human-centered design.
- High school includes Specialty Standards (e.g., AI, Cybersecurity, Data Science) and X+CS standards that support integration across other subject areas.

Framing the Conversation

Lead with student outcomes, not standards compliance. Administrators respond to what this means for kids.

Try saying this...	Instead of...
"The updated standards help us build a coherent CS pathway from elementary through high school—so students aren't starting over every few years."	"We need to realign our curriculum to the new CSTA standards."
"AI is no longer optional in CS education—these standards integrate it across grade levels so every student gets exposure, not just elective students."	"The standards added AI concepts."
"One thing I'd love your support on is professional development time so our team can interpret and apply these—it's not just me, it's any teacher integrating CS."	"I need PD funding."
"The Specialty Standards give high school students a real pathway—not just a one-off	"We should add more CS electives."

course—in areas like cybersecurity or data science.”	

Key Asks You Might Bring

- Time to audit current course offerings against the new standards (crosswalk review)
- Support for interdisciplinary conversations with math, science, or ELA colleagues
- PD funding or schedule flexibility for sustained CS professional learning
- Counselor training so students are being guided toward CS pathways, not away from them
- Removal of unnecessary prerequisites that limit access to CS courses

Reflection prompt to share with your admin:

“What system-level decisions—scheduling, prerequisites, course catalogs—would help more of our students experience coherent CS learning from elementary through high school?”

Section 2: Inviting Your Non-CS Colleagues In

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The 2026 CSTA standards include something that has never been quite as explicit before: X+CS Standards, designed specifically to support teachers in other subjects who want to integrate computer science into what they already teach. This section helps you open that conversation with a math, science, English, social studies, or arts colleague.

Start with What They Already Do

The best entry point is not the standards document—it's their classroom. X+CS is not about adding CS on top of what they teach. It's about helping them see where computing already fits.

Subject	What They Already Do	CS Connection to Highlight
Math	Model real-world phenomena, interpret data sets	Computational thinking, data analysis, algorithmic design
Science	Analyze data, design experiments, simulate systems	Data & Analysis standards, AI concepts, modeling
English/ELA	Research, argumentation, digital citizenship	Computing & Society, ethics, digital storytelling
Social Studies	Study technology's social impact, civic participation	History of computing, AI impacts, equity in CS
Art / Music / Media	Creative production, visual communication	Human-centered design, game development, physical computing
Journalism	Investigate, verify information, storytelling with data	Data literacy, digital tools, media & computing

What to Say When You First Bring It Up

Keep it low-stakes and curiosity-driven. You're not asking them to teach CS—you're asking them to think alongside you.

Good openers...	What to avoid...
"Do you ever have students analyze data in your class? I'd love to talk about how we might connect that to what I'm doing."	"You should teach CS concepts in your class."
"The new CSTA standards actually have a whole section designed for teachers like	"You don't have to know how to code." (implies they thought they did)

you—not for CS teachers. Can I share it with you?"	
"I'm trying to make CS feel relevant to more students. Would you be open to collaborating on a unit?"	"This is really easy. You could do it without any help."

Realistic Ways to Start Small

- Co-plan a single lesson that connects their content to a computing concept—no tech required.
- Share the interactive CSTA web display and explore the interdisciplinary connections together.
- Invite them to an online CSTA PD session or upcoming standards event.
- Ask them to be the "content expert" in a project where students use computing to investigate a topic from their subject.

Remind them:

The X+CS Standards don't require a colleague to teach CS. They identify where CS can naturally align with what they already teach—and give both of you language to talk about it together.

About the 2026 CSTA PK–12 CS Standards

The 2026 CSTA PK–12 Computer Science Standards are equity-centered, community-generated, future-oriented, research-based, and flexible. Written for educators by educators, they define the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need to be prepared for a world powered by computing.

Explore the standards: csteachers.org/pk12standards/view

Section 3: Reviewing Curriculum-Standards Lens

Section 3: Reviewing Curriculum Through the Standards Lens

When evaluating a curriculum—whether you're adopting something new or auditing what you already use—the 2026 standards give you a clear framework to ask better questions. This section helps you move beyond "does it cover loops?" to "does this develop the whole student?"

What to Look for in Any CS Curriculum

The 2026 CSTA standards are organized around three interconnected elements. Strong curriculum should reflect all three:

Element	What It Means	Curriculum Review Question
Concepts	Core CS knowledge: Algorithms & Design, Programming, Data & Analysis, Systems & Security, Computing & Society	Does this curriculum map to specific standards, including boundary statements?
Practices	How students engage: Ethics & Social Responsibility, Inclusive Collaboration, Computational Thinking, Human-Centered Design	Are students given opportunities to collaborate, reflect, and engage with ethical dimensions of CS—not just complete tasks?
Dispositions	Habits of mind: Creativity, Critical thinking, Curiosity, Persistence, Reflectiveness, Resourcefulness, Sense of Belonging	Does the curriculum support students in developing identity and belonging in CS—not just skills?

Additional Curriculum Review Checkpoints

- Does it address AI as integrated content, not a standalone add-on?
- Does it honor grade-level progressions—not repeating content or leaving gaps?
- Does it include culturally relevant contexts and diverse representation?
- Does it provide adaptation guidance for different classroom contexts?
- Has it been reviewed through the CSTA Curriculum Alignment process? (Look for the CSTA Seal of Alignment)

Quick crosswalk tip:

Use the 2017 → 2026 Standards Crosswalk (available at csteachers.org) to identify where your current materials map to the revised standards, where gaps exist, and where previous coverage is now organized differently.

Section 4: Talking with a State Leader

Section 3: Talking with a State Leader

Conversations with state-level stakeholders—policy staff, department of education contacts, legislators or their aides—require you to translate your classroom experience into language that resonates at a systems level. Your perspective as a CS teacher is valuable and often underrepresented in these rooms.

What State Leaders Are Focused On

- Coherent policy that supports CS education from PK through grade 12
- Equitable access across geography, demographics, and school type
- Alignment between CS standards, teacher certification, and curriculum adoption cycles
- Preparation for workforce and postsecondary readiness
- Accountability and data: who is taking CS, and who isn't

What You Can Bring to the Conversation

Your classroom experience is evidence. You are not just a voice—you are data. State leaders need to hear from teachers about what implementation actually looks like, what barriers exist, and what support would make a difference.

Your experience...	...connects to their priorities
"My students struggle to see themselves in CS because of how it's taught or scheduled."	Equity and access gaps in participation data
"I teach students who have no CS background from earlier grades."	Need for coherent PK–5 CS implementation and vertical alignment
"I'm the only CS teacher in my building and there's no pathway for students after my class."	Specialty Standards, multi-course pathway design, staffing policy
"My students ask about AI constantly but the curriculum doesn't address it."	AI integration across the 2026 standards as a central feature
"I had to teach myself everything—there's no PD designed for where I am."	PD policy, certification pathways, funding for sustained learning

Useful Framing for Policy Conversations

- The 2026 CSTA PK–12 Standards provide a research-based foundation states can adopt or align to—reducing the burden of building from scratch.

- The Specialty Standards (AI, Cybersecurity, Data Science, etc.) offer a blueprint for state-approved advanced course sequences.
- The X+CS Standards support integration across subject areas, enabling CS skills to reach students who never enroll in a standalone CS course.
- CSTA offers direct partnership for state writing teams, presentations, technical support, and crosswalk tools.

A few sample questions to raise with state leaders:

How does our state's CS policy align with the 2026 CSTA standards—and where are the gaps?

What supports exist for teachers who are new to CS or who teach in schools with no CS program?

How is the state tracking who has access to CS, disaggregated by student group and geography?

Are there pathways for non-CS teachers to integrate computing across their subjects?