

Minnesota's High School Graduation Requirements

Students must meet state and local high school graduation requirements

To graduate from a Minnesota public high school, a student must meet the state's course credit and testing requirements and any additional local requirements established by the school district. State graduation requirements are outlined in [Minnesota Statutes, chapter 120B](#), and [Minnesota Rules, chapter 3501](#). Students also must pass three standards-based tests in reading, math, and writing.

Minnesota requires students to complete 21.5 required and elective course credits

State course credit requirements for graduating from high school require students to complete 21.5 course credits:

- four language arts credits
- three math credits in algebra, geometry and statistics, and probability; students in the class of 2015 and later also must complete an algebra II credit (or its equivalent) as part of this three-credit requirement
- three science credits that include one biology credit; students can use an agriculture science course to meet a general science credit, and students in the class of 2015 and later also must complete one physics or chemistry credit as part of this three-credit requirement
- three-and-a-half social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, economics, and government and citizenship, or three social studies credits in U.S. history, geography, world history, government and citizenship, and half a credit in economics taught in the social studies, business, or agriculture education department of a high school
- one art credit
- seven elective credits

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, students must also have physical education, based on standards developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education.

A course credit signifies that a student successfully completed an academic year of study in a particular subject area or the district otherwise determined that the student mastered the subject area. Students may use a career and technical education course to meet a general science, math, or art credit.

State graduation requirements apply to ELL students and children with disabilities

Students with limited English proficiency, or English language learners (ELL), must meet the same graduation requirements as all other students. Children with disabilities must be given accommodations that are appropriate to their strengths and needs, and that permit equal access to and work toward grade-level content standards.

Students also must complete local graduation requirements

The state requires each district to establish standards in local graduation requirements for health, and also for physical education until the 2012-2013 school year when state physical education standards apply. Districts also must establish standards in career and technical education and world languages, and must offer

elective courses in these two subject areas. Districts may impose additional local graduation requirements.

Students must pass the GRAD writing, reading, and math tests; limited exceptions apply to some students

To graduate from high school, a Minnesota public school student who entered grade 8 in the 2005-2006 school year or later must pass three standards-based Graduation Required Assessment for Diploma (GRAD) tests: writing in grade 9; reading in grade 10; and math in grade 11. The few remaining who entered grade 8 in the 2004-2005 school year or earlier who have not yet graduated must pass three minimum-competency Basic Skills Tests (BSTs): reading and math in grade 8; and writing in grade 10. A student who does not pass may retake a test according to an established retest schedule. Students in the classes of 2010 through 2014 who do not pass the math GRAD test may still graduate if they meet all other specified requirements.

Students with limited English proficiency who first enroll in a Minnesota public school in grade 9 or above need not pass the GRAD tests to graduate. Other public school students in unique situations must pass the GRAD reading, math, and writing tests; those students include dual enrollment students, foreign exchange students, open enrollment students, postsecondary enrollment options students, district-placed students, students attending school under a tuition agreement, students without an individualized education program (IEP) placed for care and treatment, and students without an IEP program in a correctional facility.

GRAD test items that students must pass to graduate are embedded in the reading and math MCA-IIs

The GRAD reading and math test items that students must pass to graduate in Minnesota are embedded in the reading and math Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments-Series II (MCA-IIs). Students' GRAD test scores and MCA-II test scores are reported separately. The state and districts use students' GRAD test scores to determine whether students graduate. The state and districts use students' MCA-II test scores to comply with a federal requirement that districts demonstrate adequate yearly progress sufficient to have all students proficient in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year. Also to comply with federal law, many 11th grade ELL students take the Mathematics Test for English Language Learners (MTELL), which assesses the same grade-level math standards as the math MCA-II.

MTAS is an alternative assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities

Students with IEPs and significant cognitive disabilities can take the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) instead of the GRAD reading and math tests. The MTAS is an alternative assessment in reading, math, and science that is based on alternative achievement standards and measures the extent to which students are making progress in the general curriculum. Students with IEPs and significant cognitive disabilities also can take the Alternative Assessment for Writing, which is an alternative assessment for the GRAD writing test.

The MCA II high school science test is not a graduation requirement

Although the federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to administer a science test to high school students, students do not need to pass the high school science MCA II to graduate. State law prohibits the education commissioner from requiring students to receive a passing score on high school science assessments as a condition of receiving a diploma.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Lisa Larson at 651-296-8036.

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